

Юрий Рубцов



ШТРАФНИКИ не кричали: «За Сталина!»



Великая Отечественная: Незвестная война

Abstract

".. Therefore, we do not shout" cheers! "- With death, we play silent." The famous song of Vysotsky is echoed by many veterans: "We went on the attack - "For the Motherland, for Stalin "were not shouting. Matyuki completely - this was the "Hurrah!" of the penal company. There was no time for Stalin..."; "Neither 'Hurrah!' nor 'For Stalin!' the penalty box shouted. They went on the attack with a checkmate. Yes, and how to shout "For Stalin!" If he sentenced them to death ... "This" vow of silence "was observed even after the war - even" having washed away the guilt with blood ", they preferred not to remember service in penal battalions and penal companies: out of tens of thousands of survivors memoirs left memoirs by a few, whose voices are now drowning in a cacophony of loud "revelations", cheap sensations and false films like the scandalous "Penal Battalion" or the completely obscene "Expectation". Based not on rumors and gossip, but on archival documents and personal

correspondence with veterans (most of these precious testimonies are published for the first time), the author restores the true history of the penal formations of the Red Army, through which almost 420 thousand soldiers of "variable composition" passed during the years of the Great Patriotic War , of which half did not return from the battle.

"At the front there was a rumor that it was forbidden for the penalized to shout "Hurrah" - so they cover obscenities. This is nonsense. Checkmate was the second battle cry of our entire army after "Hurrah", and the penalty box did not differ from the others in this ... "

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Yury Rubtsov The penalty box did not shout: "For Stalin!"

Introduction

The Red Army, like the army of any other country, has never been perfect. Being mass, multimillion, it could not, with all its desire, be staffed only by selected representatives of society. Invariably left much to be desired and the state of military discipline and law and order in its ranks.

With the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, millions of people joined the Red Army, among whom were, of course, not only persistent, strong-willed and disciplined people. But what could be put up with in peacetime threatened the very foundations of the state order in the time of war. Panic, desertion, refusal to carry out military orders, disobedience to superiors, unauthorized abandonment of positions, outrages against the civilian population were capable of destroying the most persistent military organism and disorganizing the rear. "We opened prisons and took everyone into the army ... The Red

Army is not ideal," I. V. Stalin admitted, when in April 1945, at a dinner arranged after the conclusion of the Soviet-Yugoslav treaty of friendship, mutual assistance and cooperation, a member Yugoslav delegation M. Djilas reproached the soldiers of the Red Army for inappropriate behavior in the liberated territories of Europe[1] .

This recognition was made at a time when the war was victoriously ending. What can we say about the first months of the war, which were developing simply catastrophically. The active actions of the enemy, who widely resorted to detours and coverage, tank breakthroughs, continuous air strikes, landings, along with the demoralization of military personnel, as well as the mass death of the command and political staff of the Red Army, due to which the personnel of subunits, units and even formations remained without control, led to the fact that many military units were literally dispersed, sometimes without even having time to properly come into contact with the enemy. Quite a few servicemen in the kaleidoscope of battle, when leaving numerous encirclements, lagged behind their units, or even deliberately fled to the rear, deserted, surrendered ...

During the first three weeks of the war, the Wehrmacht troops advanced 400–450 km in the northwest direction, 450–600 km in the west, and 300–350 km in the southwest. The Red Army left the Baltic States, Belarus, a significant part of Ukraine and Moldova. There was a threat of an enemy breakthrough to Leningrad, Smolensk and Kyiv. Of the 170 divisions that took the first blow of the fascist invasion army, 28 were completely destroyed, and 70 lost at least 50% of their personnel and military equipment. Only three fronts - Northwestern, Western and Southwestern - according to incomplete estimates, lost about 750 thousand personnel, 18.8 thousand guns and mortars, 11.7 thousand tanks, about 4 thousand aircraft[2] . The losses suffered had a heavy impact on the combat capability of the troops, on morale.

the psychological state of the personnel.

Cowards, alarmists and deserters have always been fought in any army in the world. And the Red Army was no exception here. By order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR I. V. Stalin dated July 28, 1942 No. 227, better known under the unofficial name "Not a Step Back!"[3], ^v penal units were established in the Soviet Armed Forces as special military formations intended for military personnel to serve sentences for criminal and military crimes that are committed in wartime. By the same order, barrage detachments were formed as part of each combined arms army[4] . Taking this step, the Supreme High Command relied on the experience of the past. The —

creation of such units in the Red Army was not something unique. They first appeared during the Civil War by order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic of June 3, 1919. The Bolshevik leaders, who knew mass psychology well, were fully aware that a person can be forced to go under enemy fire, not only "gingerbread" to death - fiery appeals, awards or career prospects, but also a "whip". Extreme, drastic measures were demanded, comparable to the danger to which a person was exposed on the battlefield.

This attitude was very succinctly expressed by the chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic, People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs in the Leninist government, L. D. Trotsky: "You cannot lead masses of people to death,

not having in the arsenal of the command of the death penalty. As long as, proud of their technology, evil tailless monkeys called people build armies and fight, the command will put the soldiers between possible death ahead and inevitable death behind. Revolutionary military tribunals—

widely practiced in relation to deserters such a measure of punishment as sending them to a penal company with a suspended death sentence. In fact, these sentences were not carried out, since most of the convicts either atoned for their guilt or died in battle. In total, in the country for seven months in 1919, 95 thousand malicious deserters were convicted, of which more than half were sent to penal units, and 600 people were shot. The Red Army soldiers convicted of self-injury, or, [6] as they called it later, self-mutilation, were also transferred to the category of penalty box. The first experience of detachments also belongs to the Civil War. — .

In accordance with the resolution "On Desertion", adopted on December 5, 1918 by the Council of Workers 'and Peasants' Defense, barrage detachments from persons loyal to Soviet power, as well as special cavalry divisions, were organized throughout the front line to catch deserters. The largest among them were the Trotsky division, called the "Secret Division", and the Black Hundred detachment. "The organization of barrage detachments is one of the most important tasks of commanders and

commissars," said the order of the RVS of the Western Front, issued in 1920 during the Soviet-Polish war. "Each large military unit should have at least a thin, but strong and reliable mesh of barrage detachments behind it ... The ease and impunity of desertion can corrode the best part. A young soldier, trying to break out of the fire into which he fell for the first time, must meet a firm hand that will forcefully return him back with a warning of severe punishment to all violators of military duty. The fleeing hider must stumble upon a revolver or run into a bayonet ... "[7]

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There is no doubt that the widespread use by the High Command of the Red Army of penal and barrage

formations became one of the factors that ensured victory over the armed forces of the White movement.

The task of a mass struggle against defectors, alarmists, deserters again faced the Red Army 20 years later. And again, the authorities resorted to extreme measures, comparable to the danger that a person was exposed to on the battlefield. I must say, this was met with understanding in the army environment.

One of the heroes of K. M. Simonov's novel "The Living and the Dead", the army commander, talked about the methods of bringing to life a cowardly, confused person in battle: "But let's ask ourselves: why does a person not follow an order? Most often because he is afraid to die while doing it. And now we ask: how to overcome this fear? Something that is even stronger than the fear of death. What is this? Different circumstances are different: faith in victory, self-esteem, fear of looking like a coward in the face of comrades, but sometimes just fear of being shot."

There is a legend that the immediate reason for the establishment of penal units was an emergency, which was reported to I. V. Stalin[8] . Allegedly, a certain pilot killed his wife and her lover and, being sentenced to death, turned to the leader with a request to give him the opportunity to die in battle. The legend says that Stalin pardoned him, and in order for such criminals in uniform to have the opportunity to wash away the guilt with blood, he ordered the establishment of penal battalions.

A similar story with a certain officer, but with a different ending, indeed, took place. Stalin himself told his Yugoslav guests about it at the aforementioned dinner in April 1945. The Soviet leader told the story of a major pilot who "played tricks with a woman", and when a "knight engineer", a rival, stood up for her. Stalin, taking advantage of the right, in-Chief shot the one granted to him as the Supreme Commander-for the duration of the war, released the major and sent him to the front. "Now he is one of the heroes," said the owner of the feast and added: "A warrior must be understood." It was then that he admitted that "the Red Army is not

perfect," but put his accents, - "It is important that she beat the Germans - and she beats them well - everything else is secondary." With the entry of the Red Army into the territory of Eastern Europe, with its approach

to Berlin, Stalin liked to talk about the need to understand the broken psychology of people who witnessed the gigantic devastation of their land and the death of their relatives and comrades. But he was clearly far from condescending in assessing the "not ideal" army in the first year and a half, when the outcome of the war was teetering on the brink of defeat. There was no time to worry about individual "naughty" servicemen. Yes, and jealous majors for all penal battalions would not be enough.

Considerations about the introduction of penal units in the Red Army could have occurred to Stalin from the very beginning of the war. The extremely unfortunate, even catastrophic development of events forced him to look for any means to stop the retreat, to stabilize the situation on the fronts. Such an idea is

suggested by the actions of the leader - the feverish and repeated replacement of the commanders of the fronts and armies, and especially the execution of generals from the command staff of the Western Front - D. G. Pavlov, V. E. Klimovskikh, N. A. Klich, A. A. Korobkov, A. T. Grigorieva, A. I. Tayursky, S. I. Oborin, S. A. Chernykh. In the resolution of the State Defense Committee of July 16, 1941, which announced that the indicated persons were brought to trial by a military tribunal, the phrase was said about "individual" commanders and ordinary soldiers who "show instability, alarmism, shameful cowardice, throw down their weapons and, forgetting their duty in front of the Motherland, grossly violate the oath, turn into a herd of sheep, running in a panic before an insolent enemy" [9]. And the execution of top commanders was supposed to show such fighters and commanders that the High Command will stop at nothing to restore order in the troops and establish proper discipline. The order of the

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 270 of August 16, 1941, with a very expressive title "On cases of cowardice and surrender and measures to suppress such actions," also worked in this direction. On the example of Generals V.I. Kachalov, P.G. Ponedelin, N.K. Kirillov and M.I. The army "has unstable, cowardly, cowardly elements. And these elements are present not only among the Red Army, but also among

commanding staff." The order declared commanders and political workers, "during the battle, tearing off their insignia and deserting to the rear or surrendering to the enemy", malicious deserters and obliged all higher commanders and commissars to shoot them on the spot[10] . With the —

improvement of the situation on the fronts, especially near Moscow, where in the winter of 1941/42 the Red Army carried out a successful counteroffensive, the relevance of punitive measures seemed to be a thing of the past. However, they were again in demand due to a sharp change in the strategic situation on the southern flank of the Soviet German front in late

spring - summer 1942. The essence of the new disaster was the order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR dated July 28, 1942 No. 227 as follows: "Fighting is going on in the Voronezh region , on the Don, in the south at the gates of the North Caucasus. The German invaders are rushing towards Stalingrad, towards the Volga and want to seize the Kuban, the North Caucasus with their oil and grain wealth at any cost. The enemy has already captured Voroshilovgrad, Starobelsk,

Rossosh, Kupyansk, Valuyki, Novocherkassk, Rostov-on-Don, half of Voronezh... Every commander, Red Army soldier and political worker must understand that our means are not unlimited. The territory of the Soviet state is not a desert, but people - workers, peasants, intelligentsia, our fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, children. The territory of the USSR, which the enemy has captured and is striving to capture, is bread and other products for the army and rear, metal and fuel for industry, factories, plants supplying the army with weapons and ammunition, and railways. After the loss of Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic States, Donbass and other regions, we have much less territory, therefore, there are much fewer people, bread, metal, plants, factories. We have lost more than 70 million people, more than 800 million poods of grain a year and more than 10 million tons of metal a year. We no longer have superiority over the Germans either in manpower reserves or in grain supplies. To retreat further means to ruin ourselves and at the same time ruin our Motherland. Each new piece of territory left by us will strengthen the enemy in every possible way and weaken our defense, our Motherland in every p

In this situation, Stalin returned to the idea of creating penal units and barrage formations in the Armed Forces, hoping with their help to stop the unauthorized withdrawal of units from their positions without orders from the command.

An atmosphere of mystery reigned around Order No. 227 for many years. Although it was not secret, but contained only the stamp "Without publication", it was published in the public press only in 1988. But the topic of penal boxes, albeit dull, had previously sounded in fiction, in military memoirs. The interest in such a closed page of the military past was clear in society.

By the beginning of the 90s of the last century, the first scientific articles on the history of penal parts belong. The poor development of the topic was primarily due to the difficulty of access to documents and materials due to the secrecy regime that had been in effect since the war, and the impossibility of covering the combat activities of this kind of military units in the open press[12].

In the absence of truthful publications about the penalty box, ordinary ideas about them did not go beyond the well-known song of Vladimir Vysotsky "Penal Battalions". But the song is a source of emotions, feelings, not information. As for the facts, in recent years the press and television have not skimped on them. But what are these facts? Taking advantage of people's poor awareness, other authors focus on sensationalism, not caring not only about the truth, but even about plausibility.

"Even from the participants in the war about penal battalions, you can hear such things that you won't meet in a fairy tale," wrote N. I. Saprygin from the Kemerovo region, who himself fought in a penal, wrote to the author of this book. It is difficult to disagree with the opinion of a front-line soldier, it is worth reading or watching the works of other writers, journalists, filmmakers. How many "discoveries"

made by them! They write that in the Red Army there were many thousands of penal units in which several million people fought. And as part of the Bryansk Front, K.K. Rokossovsky allegedly fought a whole brigade of fines, which was sent there precisely because the marshal was himself a former prisoner. Volunteer sailors of the assault detachment of Major Ts. L. Kunikov, who in February 1943 captured the bridgehead on Myskhako in the area

Novorossiysk. Allegedly, a detachment of senior lieutenant K.F. Olshansky was formed from the penalty box, which landed in the enemy rear in the Nikolaev region in March 1944. Alexander Matrosov is also described as a penal prisoner, although he was a pupil of the Ufa labor colony and got to the front by mobilization. Without the slightest hint of a joke, they write about the existence of women's penal battalions in the Red Army. Without blushing, they claim that "exclusively GULAG prisoners" were sent to the penal battalions. And besides them, there were also men of military age who were in the occupation, if after their release they could not submit certificates of participation in the partisan movement.

The television series "Penal Battalion" (screenplay by E. Ya. Volodarsky, director N. N. Dostal) did a bad job, because much turned out to be turned upside down there. By the will of the authors of the film, demoted officers and ordinary soldiers, political prisoners and criminals released from the camp, fight side by side in the military unit they invented. In the course of the film, an Orthodox priest Father Michael joins the penal battalion. The former captain of the Red Army penal Tverdokhlebov is in command of the military unit. He also selects the rest of the command staff - company, platoon.

What appears on the screen are not soldiers of the Red Army, but some ragamuffins living in an atmosphere of semi-partisan freemen. Commanders, in order to achieve the fulfillment of a combat mission, instead of issuing an order, persuade their subordinates. The political staff, starting with the commissar, is completely absent in this cinematic penal battalion, but the head of the special department of the division is constantly at the location of the battalion, as if he had no other worries. The penalty boxers themselves seem to be not on allowance in the regular army, but are somewhere deep behind enemy lines and therefore are forced to provide everything necessary, including weapons, to provide for themselves independently and at the expense of the enemy. As for the status of the penalty box, according to the will of the authors of the film, it is, in fact, a life sentence. The viewer is led to a false thought: no matter how much the penal fights, how much heroism you show and how much you get injured, the only way to get rid of your "sins" is to die in battle. Otherwise - death from a bullet of a special officer or detach

Many inexperienced viewers mistook the "spreading cranberries" of the TV movie "Penal Battalion" for the truth.

Over the past two decades, a frontal attack on the national memory, on the historical consciousness of our compatriots has gained momentum. Taking advantage of the normal and necessary process of clearing the past of omissions, distortions and ideological gloss that began in the second half of the 1980s, certain forces both inside the country and abroad, under the pretext of a "new reading" of the history of Russia, especially its Soviet period, are trying to present the deeds of our fathers and grandfathers as discounted by history.

The history of the Great Patriotic War, in full accordance with the monstrous plan of the notorious Rezun: to destroy in the minds of Russians the last thing that preserves holiness, which unites us all - the memory of the Great Victory, became the object of special attacks of the "new readers". The credo of this defector was shared by dozens of journalists, writers, filmmakers and thousands of graphomaniacs.

Plots related to Stalinist repressions, defeats of the Red Army, losses, captivity, collaborationism, special departments, penal units, barrage detachments are considered by them as the most suitable for their unseemly goals. The answer to the actions of the "new readers" can

be the most objective, based on a wide range of reliable sources, a story about penal units and the soldiers and commanders who fought in them.

For these purposes, the author involved a significant range of documents, both published and archival. In addition, the memoirs of war veterans, primarily those who themselves fought as part of separate penal battalions (OShB) and separate penal companies (OShR) [13] served as a valuable source. In recent years, articles, interviews and even memoir books have been published by this category of veterans. The author especially values the correspondence he has with the fighters and commanders of penal formations, which he tried to use as carefully as possible.

Otherwise, as it seems, it cannot be. Most of these worthy people are no longer alive, but their objective

evidence - such is the desire of the front-line soldiers themselves - should serve to affirm the truth about the war.

The book testifies: **P. S.**

Amosov, a retired major. As a platoon commander, he was demoted to the rank and file and sent to the 15th Special Operations Brigade of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Finished the war in Germany rehabilitated (*author's archive*);

S. L. Aria, former penal soldier of the 683rd OSHR of the Southern front (<http://www.worM-war.ru/article544.html>):

P. D. Barabolya, Major General of Justice, retired. He commanded a machine-gun platoon in the 610th OSHR of the Volga military flotilla (*Penalmen went into battle / - In the book: "Living memory. The Great Patriotic War: the truth about the war." In 3 vols. T. 1.*

M., 1995); **A. V. Belyaev**, retired lieutenant colonel. Fought on the Western Front as assistant chief of staff of the 16th Special Operations Brigade

(*author's archive*); **A. I. Bernshtein**, retired officer. From the post of engineer of the regiment of barrage balloons, he ended up in a penal battalion. Restored in rank and position, ended the war by participating in the Victory Parade on Red Square (*Interfax Vremya, 2002, October 23*); **E. A.**

Golbraikh, retired captain, deputy commander of the 163rd OSHR of the 51st Army in 1944–1945. By the time he was appointed to the penal company, he managed to fight near Stalingrad, liberated Donbass, Crimea (*Duel, 2005, No. 41, 43-45,*

47); **N. G. Gudoshnikov**, retired captain. Commanding a platoon in the 121st OSHR of the 40th Army of the Voronezh and 1st Ukrainian Fronts, he went through a combat path from the Kursk

Bulge to the Carpathians (*author's archive*); **G. M. Dubinin**, former penal soldier of the 280th OSHR of the 50th Army

of the 2nd Belorussian Front (*author's archive*); **A. V. Karpov**, retired colonel. Former penal private of the 45th OSHR of the Kalinin Front. Upon his release, he fought in regimental intelligence, became a Hero of the So

M. G. Klyuchko, retired officer. Former platoon commander of the 322nd OSHR of the 28th Army (*Zerkalo Nedeli (Kiev),*

2000, No. 20); **I. I. Korzhik**, retired senior lieutenant. As part of the OSB fought as a private on the Leningrad Front (*author's archive*);

A. V. Pyltsyn, retired colonel. During the war years, he fought in the 8th Specialized School of the 1st Belorussian Front as a platoon and company commander (***Penalty strike, or How an officer's penal battalion***

reached Berlin. St. Petersburg, 2003); **M. T. Samokhvalov**, former sergeant. By order of the division commander, he was sent to the 226th OSHR on the 1st Belorussian Front. Ended

the war on the Elbe (***author's archive)***; **N. I. Saprygin**, former sergeant. Twice sent to the OSHR on the 2nd Ukrainian and 2nd Baltic fronts, where he was awarded the Order of

Glory 2nd degree (***author's archive)***; **G. S. Slyudyanin**, retired colonel. Former Chief of Staff of the 119th Reserve Rifle Regiment of the Siberian Military

District (***author's archive)***; **N. I. Smirnov**, retired officer. From 1943 until the end of the war he commanded the OSHR attached to the 47th Army ([http://www.world](http://www.worldwar.m/printer_512.html)

[war.m/printer_512.html](http://www.worldwar.m/printer_512.html)); **A. G. Sorokin**, retired captain, former commander of the OShB on the 1st

Ukrainian Front (***author's archive)***; **M. I. Suknev**, retired lieutenant colonel. He was appointed commander of the OShB of the Volkhov Front from the post of commander of the rifle battalion of the 1349th rifle regiment of the 225th rifle division (***Notes of the commander of the penal***

battalion. Memoirs of the battalion commander. 1941–1945. M., 2006); **N. Tarasenko**, a retired lieutenant colonel, was sent to a penal battalion after being convicted by a

military tribunal in December 1944 (***Krasnodar, 2005, March 11–17)***; **I. N. Tretyakov**, retired major. He commanded the 192nd OSHR of the 13th Army of the 1st

Ukrainian Front, disabled during the Great Patriotic War (***author's archive)***[14]. The passage of time is irreversible. It will take another ten, another years - and the sharpness of the perception of the war will go away along with the front-line soldiers. Therefore, we must hurry and give the floor to the

Chapter

1 To whom - to the order, but to whom - to the "tower"

On January 5, 1942, at a meeting of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, I. V. Stalin, clearly overestimating the results of counter-offensive operations near Moscow, Rostov-on-Don and Tikhvin, demanded that the General Staff develop a plan for a general offensive on all fronts - from Lake Ladoga to the Black Sea. Our troops did not have the necessary superiority in any of the directions, so the General Staff advocated a transition to active strategic defense. But the Supreme Commander-in-Chief insisted on his own, setting the task of making 1942 the year of the final defeat of fascist Germany.

The erroneousness and unrealistic nature of Stalin's attitude soon made themselves felt. In the northwestern direction in January - April 1942, the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, advancing towards each other, fought in the Luban direction. The 2nd shock army (commander - General A. A. Vlasov) deeply wedged into the enemy defenses. Due to the miscalculations of the Headquarters and the commander of the Leningrad Front, General M.S. Khozin, the army was surrounded and practically ceased to exist. Few managed to break out of the ring, Vlasov himself preferred to surrender. The operation of the Volkhov Front (commanded by General K. A. Meretskov) to withdraw the 2nd shock army from the encirclement cost the loss of almost 95 thousand people, of which about 55 thousand were irretrievable (that is, those who died in battle, died from wounds on battlefield and in medical institutions, missing, captured).

The tragedy also occurred in the southwestern direction in the Kharkov region. In the winter - spring of 1942, the troops of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts launched an offensive against the Donbass-Taganrog group of Germans. Having advanced 90–100 km, they secured themselves in the Barvenkovsky ledge formed in the front line. From here, on May 12, the troops of the Southwestern Front (commander - Marshal S.K. Timoshenko) launched a new offensive, which took place with visible success in the first days. However, the enemy counterattacked.

northern and southern faces of the Barvenkovsky ledge, and a large grouping of our troops was surrounded. The operation ended in a heavy defeat, the losses of both fronts exceeded 277 thousand people, of which more than 170 thousand were irretrievable.

The attempt of the Soviet command to expel the enemy from the Crimea also ended catastrophically. The command of the Crimean Front, which was preparing for the offensive (commanded by Lieutenant General D.T. Kozlov), was unable to reveal the plans of the enemy in a timely manner. In addition, both the Headquarters and the General Staff literally could not decide until the last day: against all the rules of military art, the front was given the task of both

defending and advancing. On May 8, the formations of the 11th German Army, Field Marshal E. Manstein, delivered a sudden blow. Despite a significant superiority in forces and means, the Soviet troops, after two weeks of fighting, were forced to leave the Kerch Peninsula and evacuate to Taman. The irretrievable losses of the Crimean Front and the Black Sea Fleet amounted to more than 176 thousand people. Along with the commander and headquarters of the front, the main responsibility for the catastrophe lies with the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, the army commissar of the 1st rank LZ Mekhlis, an active, but often thoughtless conductor of the Stalinist line. With the loss of the Kerch Peninsula, the Soviet troops also had to leave Sevastopol on July 3.

The failures of the Red Army in the Lyuban region, near Kharkov and in the Crimea allowed the enemy, who had again seized the strategic initiative, to proceed with the implementation of his own plan on the southern sector of the Soviet-German front. It consisted in the destruction of the troops of the Red Army west of the Don in order to capture the oil-bearing regions of the Caucasus. At the end of June, having struck at the junction of the Bryansk and South-Western fronts, the Germans broke through the defenses of the Soviet troops and began to rapidly advance in the direction of Voronezh and the Don. On July 6, Voronezh was partially captured. To the south, the enemy threw back our troops behind the Don and continued to develop the offensive along the western bank of the river to the south, trying at all costs to reach the large bend of the Don. By mid-July, the strategic front of the Red Army was broken through to a depth of 150-400 km, which allowed the Wehrmacht to launch an offensive

big bend to Stalingrad. With the capture of Rostov-on-Don by the Germans (July 24) and the forcing of the Don in its lower reaches, an immediate threat hung over the North Caucasus.

The troops of the Southwestern, Southern and Bryansk fronts suffered heavy losses. In order to restore the stability of the strategic defense, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was forced to use a significant part of its reserves - six combined arms armies and six tank corps[15] .

In accordance with the directive signed by A. Hitler on July 23, Army Group A was to advance into the Caucasus, and Army Group B was given the task, which at first was of an auxiliary nature - to capture the forces of the 6th Army, Colonel General F. Paulus at Stalingrad. True, already on July 30 this decision was revised, and the Stalingrad direction became a priority, the 4th Panzer Army was turned here from the Caucasian direction. From a city lying on a secondary direction, Stalingrad quickly turned into a key point where the fate of the entire 1942 campaign was decided. The Soviet command did not exclude the possibility that

the Wehrmacht could launch an offensive in the Stalingrad direction even earlier. To repel the German offensive in the great bend of the Don, on July 12, 1942, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command formed the Stalingrad Front (commanded by Marshal S.K. Timoshenko, then Generals V.N. Gordov, A.I. Eremenko), before which the task was set to take the line west of the Don and prevent the enemy from breaking through.

Despite the fact that the formations of the 6th Army were inferior to the troops of the Stalingrad Front in manpower, artillery, and especially in tanks, they managed to achieve noticeable success by the end of July. The Germans were able to reach the Don in two sectors, creating a threat of encirclement of the 62nd Army in the interfluvium of the Don and Chir. During the counterattack, the Stalingrad Front lost most of its existing tanks, having lost its armored "fist", and was unable to change the situation

for the better. Undoubtedly, the insufficient ability of the highest command level to manage large masses of manpower, armored vehicles and other means of combat affected. But you have to go straight

say that the defeat of the Soviet troops was largely due to a pronounced defensive syndrome.

They retreated for many hundreds of kilometers, retreated, of course, with a heavy heart, yielding to a more sophisticated enemy, but in the brains of many a reassuringly treacherous thought flickered: Russia is great, maybe the enemy will not swallow it all, will choke.

Withdrawal, retreat... Sometimes the art of war seems to dictate to level the front line, to take a more convenient position in the rear. But the time comes when it is necessary at all costs to cling to precisely this line, to detain the advancing enemy here, not relying on how vast Russia is. And here, as in any battle, a battle, a lot depends not only on the commander of the army or the commander of the corps, division, but also on the commander of the company, platoon, on the ordinary soldier. From their discipline and stamina, ability and readiness to bite into the ground, die, but do not retreat further.

In the July days of 1942, the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks received a letter from Colonel Tetushkin, commander of the 141st Rifle Division, which occupied a defensive line in the Voronezh region. The officer, who had gone through the school of the First World War, witnessed the disorderly retreat of our troops, about which he wrote with great pain to the secretary of the Central Committee G. M. Malenkov: "What a picture of the withdrawal of the armies of Yu. .) and I watched the Bryansk fronts? I did not see a single organized retreat on the front from Voronezh south to the city of Korotoyak. These were separate groups of fighters of all types of weapons, following, as a rule, without weapons, often even without shoes, carrying duffel bags and a bowler hat. Along the way, they (not all, of course) took away food from our rear army institutions and vehicles. Whoever comes with a rifle, it is usually rusty (and made in 1942). This picture is familiar to me from last year.

Colonel Tetushkin drew attention to the lack of stamina and poor training of the infantry, the lack of unquestioning obedience of the junior to the senior, especially in the link of the junior commander - a fighter. What kind of discipline can we talk about if the fighters on the march or even outside the battle threw gas masks, sapper shovels, helmets, weapons (even machine guns), horses. Enemy in

in terms of discipline, we are much stronger than us, the division commander noticed,

remembering the German prisoners who were driven tens of kilometers to the Soviet headquarters and who had everything intact to the last personal number, all of them had their boots cleaned and their faces shaved.

With the conviction of an old warrior, Tetushkin also suggested one of the ways to solve the problem: "We do not have enough strict discipline to ensure success in battle, so that no one dares to abandon their place in the trench in any situation. Die and hold on. All this must be ensured by the relevant law, reflected in the statutes. Everything that we have now (charters, regulations) is not

reach...

Discipline, as elsewhere, is especially necessary in combat, here it decides the matter. Moreover, even if there is no commander with the fighter, he must stubbornly defend himself or move forward on the enemy in the same way as
with the

commander" [16] . The fact that part of the rank and file and commanding staff was paralyzed by fear of the enemy forces, and even complete hopelessness, was also confirmed by the reports of the special department (OO) of the NKVD of the Stalingrad Front. Previously, historians practically did not turn to such documents of the security agencies because of their secrecy. Meanwhile, they contained much more objective information than, say, the reports of political agencies, which were dominated by the propaganda side. This is their special value as a historical source.

"The German army is more cultured and stronger than our army," the Red Army soldier Kolesnikov said, for example, to his colleagues in the 538th Light Aviation Regiment of the Reserve of the Supreme High Command. We can't beat the Germans. Look, what kind of equipment the Germans have, and what kind of planes we have, some kind of maize ... "" We were betrayed. Five

armies were thrown to the Germans to be devoured. Someone is currying favor with Hitler. The front is open and the situation is hopeless, but we have been marinated here since July 6 and will not be identified in any way, "such was the point of view of the chief of staff of artillery of the 76th rifle division, captain Svechkor. In the statements of military personnel, as follows

from the materials of the OO NKVD, obtained, among other things, by perusal of postal correspondence, distant rear lines began to appear more and more often, to which some people were already psychologically ready to retreat.

“Our situation is extremely difficult, almost hopeless ... So we will fight so that we won't hold out in the Urals” (head of the staffing department of the front headquarters, Major

Antonov). “If we don't hold on to the Don, then things will be very bad, we will have to retreat to the Urals. If the allies do not help us, then we ourselves will not be able to cope with the defeat of the Nazis” (Captain Pogorely, technician of the Armored

Directorate). “The Germans have now wrested the initiative from our hands, and if [we] failed to hold on to the Don, we will not hold on to the Volga either. We'll have to retreat to the Urals—

”(quartermaster of the 2nd rank [Fey](#)) [17] . This kind of "defeatist", in the terminology of those days, thoughts and statements were not uncommon. Sometimes they corresponded to the real state of affairs, reflecting, for example, weak and inept leadership of the troops, shortcomings in military equipment. But with all this, in the specific situation of the summer-autumn of 1942, such moods betrayed the weak psychological mood of many servicemen, their low spirits, and their inner readiness for

further retreat. It was at this moment that Order No. 227 was promulgated. For the first time since the start of the war, the authorities decided to tell the whole truth about the real situation on the fronts. Further retreat of the Red Army threatened the Soviet Union with the loss of national independence and state sovereignty.

"No step back! This should now be our main call, "the order of the people's commissar of defense read. War historians

have long established that the main demand for the huge human and material losses suffered by this time is from the author of Order No. 227 and his inner circle, who failed to properly prepare the country to repel the Nazi invasion. It is also true that by this order the leader, in his characteristic manner, diverted the blame from himself, shifting it to others. But this is not the whole truth.

Let's think about what actions could be taken in such emergency conditions? The choice turned out to be not great: to continue the fight against the enemy not for life, but for death, or try to go with him to the world, stop hostilities, that is, in fact, capitulate.

Despite the speculative publications that appeared in the media in the 90s of the last century, about some contacts of the Soviet leadership with the top of Nazi Germany, there is not a single reliable confirmation that I. V. Stalin, V. M. Molotov or someone else were ready to pay for a truce (peace) by giving up vast territories in favor of the enemy or by some other disproportionate price. Even assuming the unbelievable – the departure of Stalin and his

entourage from leadership positions and the formation of a new government (the leader hypothetically mentioned such a possibility on May 24, 1945 at a reception in the Kremlin of the commanders of the Red Army), the latter would have the same meager set of actions. Without much risk of error, it can be argued that any leadership that at that moment tried to buy peace through surrender would inevitably be swept away. Consequently, the leadership of the country and the people recognized only one way - to continue resistance. But in order to turn events in the desired direction, it was necessary to finally stop the enemy offensive, which rested its edge on the Volga. What levers did the Supreme Commander-in-

Chief have for this? Continue to shuffle command cadres, attributing the collapse of command and control to generals and other top commanders, as was the case in the summer and autumn of 1941? The first year of the war, however, showed that this measure was ineffective. Moreover, there were no more trained personnel than those who were already at the helm of the troops at the disposal of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

Stalin stopped shuffling military leaders at the same pace, but demand from them was cruel. In accordance with Order No. 227, commanders of units and formations, commanders who allowed unauthorized withdrawal of troops from their positions without an order from a higher command, were removed from their posts and brought to trial by a military tribunal.

But it wasn't just the management team that was the problem. The Supreme Commander, apparently, understood: it was necessary to include not only personnel, but also all possible levers of influence on the army. He (and the style of the document betrays Stalin's personal authorship) first of all turned to the most intimate among the front-line soldiers. Hence the appeal to their kindred

feelings ("the territory of the Soviet state is not a desert, but people - workers, peasants, intelligentsia, our fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, children"), to a duty to the people who never spared anything for their defenders ("the population of our country, with love and respect relating to the Red Army, begins to become disillusioned with it, loses faith in the Red Army, and many of them curse the Red Army because it gives the people under the yoke of German oppressors, and itself flows away to the east"). The emotional beginning

was supported by reasonable arguments that, no matter how great and rich our country is, the endless retreat will sooner or later lead to the fact that "we will be left without bread, without fuel, without metal, without raw materials, without factories and plants, without railways. ". Stalin

saw the root of evil in the lack of order and discipline directly in the troops - companies, battalions, air squadrons, rifle and tank regiments, divisions, which resulted in the constant abandonment of their positions. Any, the most cruel price to stop the withdrawal of our troops - such was the pathos of the Stalinist order. For conscious, persistent fighters, the call

was enough: "Not a step back without an order from the high command." And for the weak-hearted and inclined to further retreat, the Supreme, figuratively speaking, drew a whip. He not only gave the right, but also directly demanded to exterminate alarmists and cowards on the spot. And the commanders of companies, battalions, regiments, divisions, commissars and political workers who retreated from a combat position without an order from above, he declared traitors to the Motherland and ordered to treat them exactly as traitors.

As one of the most important punitive measures, the order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 227 determined the introduction of penal formations in the Red Army. The military councils of the fronts, their commanders were instructed to "form within the front from one to three (depending on the situation) penal battalions (800 people each), where to send middle and senior commanders and relevant political workers of all branches of the military who were guilty of violating discipline through cowardice or instability, and put them on more difficult sectors of the front in order to give them the opportunity to atone for their crimes against the Motherland with blood. Within the armies formed

from five to ten penal companies, where ordinary soldiers and junior commanders were sent for the same reasons.

The People's Commissar of Defense also ordered the formation of 3-5 well-armed barrage detachments (up to 200 people each) within each army, put them in the immediate rear of unstable divisions and oblige them to shoot alarmists and cowards in the event of panic and disorderly withdrawal of parts of the division.

P. D. Barabolya:

We ... knew that the mentioned 227th order provided for the formation of penal units. They had a very definite idea of the nature of their combat activities, as well as the principle of selecting "cadres" who were expected to face the most severe test by fire. Such units were made up of military personnel to serve sentences for committed criminal and military crimes. They were prescribed to be used in the most dangerous, often unpredictable, difficult combat situations. In other words, the penalists, in essence, should have been thrown into battle with the enemy where the combat regulations of the infantry were powerless from the point of view of reasonable recommendations for preserving personnel and winning a victory with little bloodshed.

(S. 355.)

With the publication of Order No. 227, the repressive apparatus of the Red Army started working without delay. In pursuance of Stalin's order, the People's Commissar of Justice of the USSR and the Prosecutor of the USSR on July 31, 1942 issued Directive No. 1096, which contained a qualification of the actions of commanders, commissars and political workers brought to trial for, as stated in the document, "unauthorized retreat from a combat position without orders from superiors commanders and for propaganda of the further retreat of the Red Army units", as well as the timing of the investigation of this category of cases.

Actions consisting in unauthorized retreat without an order were qualified under Art. 58-1 "b" of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR (treason against the Motherland, committed by a serviceman, was punishable by the highest measure of criminal punishment - execution with confiscation of all property). The investigation in these cases could not exceed 48 hours. Promotion of a further retreat was qualified under Art. 58-10, part 2 of the Criminal Code (counter-revolutionary propaganda and agitation in the presence of an aggravating circumstance - a military situation or martial law, was punishable by death). Military

prosecutors and chairmen of the tribunals were instructed to take "decisive measures to provide the command and political agencies with real assistance in fulfilling the tasks set in the order of the people's commissar of defense"[18] .

Order NPO USSR No. 227 was read in all companies, squadrons, batteries, squadrons, teams, headquarters. Without exaggeration, everyone in the Red Army was familiar with its contents, and no one could plead their own ignorance.

This was taken care of primarily by the political authorities. The very next day, the head of the GlavPU of the Red Army, Lieutenant General A.S. Shcherbakov, ordered the heads of the political departments of the fronts, military districts, and the heads of the political departments of the armies to personally ensure that the order of the people's commissar was immediately read and explained to all personnel. "There should not be a single serviceman who would not know the order of Comrade Stalin," the directive of the head of the Main Political Directorate emphasized[19] . All political agencies had to inform the GlavPU twice a day not only about the progress of the explanation of the order, but also about its implementation.

Practical actions taken on the ground were monitored by Moscow punctually. On August 15, A. S. Shcherbakov sent a new directive to the military councils and heads of political departments of the fronts, districts, and armies, in which he revealed a misunderstanding by some of them of the political significance of order No. - a political document defining the combat missions of the entire Red Army and the content of party political work for the next period of the war"[20] .

The head of the GlavPU demanded not to be limited to a formal familiarization of the personnel with the content of the order, but to link this work with educating people for stamina and perseverance in battle, with the fight against "elements that resist restoring order and discipline in the army", with the organization of penal units and barrage detachments. Members of the military councils and heads of political departments were obliged to personally engage in organizational work and the selection of suitable personnel, without entrusting this work to subordinates. On the implementation of Order No. 227, all political agencies still had to report daily to Moscow. The propaganda machine thus worked tirelessly.

First of all, Stalin's order was carried out, of course, on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front.

“At the moment, [our] main task is to stop the enemy's offensive on Tuapse and Novorossiysk ...,” L. M. Kaganovich, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, a member of the Military Council of the North Caucasian Front, wrote to the Supreme Commander in early August 1942. “At the same time, on the basis of Order 227, we are taking measures to completely improve the rear, by now [the moment] detachments have been created in most divisions, [...] penal companies have been created, special workers have been sent, including forensic prosecutors, to delay unorganized moving units and loners”[21] .

Indirect representation of the appearance of the order Soviet people first received from print in early August.

“The fierce battles taking place now southwest of Kletskaya are of a very mobile nature,” wrote Krasnaya Zvezda. - On both sides, a large number of tanks, aircraft, artillery and infantry take part in the battles. The fights spread for tens of kilometers. Detours, attacks on the flanks, oncoming collisions of tank and other columns are

the main types of combat activities of the troops. The enemy makes incredible efforts to capture the bend of the Don, but runs into resolute resistance from the soldiers of the Red Army. "Not a step back!" - this should be the motto of our soldiers everywhere! Even stronger, more organized and faster strikes against the enemy!"[22] .

It is clear that the essence of the issue was completely clear only to those who were directly related to the appearance of this newspaper article. Order No. 227 was announced to the troops immediately upon publication. The front-line soldiers knew him well throughout the war. Veteran of the Great Patriotic War I.F. Chernyavsky recalls that when in May 1944 he arrived as part of the replenishment in the 4th Artillery Reserve of the High Command (field army) White Shores of the Bryansk order No. 227 was no longer read to the new arrivals. But he became known to young soldiers from the stories of experienced soldiers and officers, Stalingrad front-line soldiers[23] .

The front-line soldiers much more realistically than many current writers assessed the essence of the penal units and the fate that awaited the servicemen who got there. The penalty box had a great danger of dying, but still not one hundred percent. A person got a chance to save his life, and even excel. The very possibility of choice meant a lot. Before the establishment of penal battalions and companies, how could the fate of a serviceman who evaded battle, disobey the order of the commander, be released from captivity, and finally, a deserter? Wartime laws provided for the majority of military crimes by execution, at best, long-term imprisonment in prison or a forced labor camp. The penal had the opportunity to return to the front and earn the removal of a criminal record. In other words, the penalty part was an alternative to extreme measures. Let us refer to the authoritative opinion of the Hero of the Soviet Union, General of the Army P.N. "The laws of war are objective. In any army, a soldier who threw down his weapon was always severely punished -

the general argued. - Penal companies and battalions, if not to complicate things, are the same companies and battalions, only placed on the most difficult sectors of the front. However, the front-line soldiers know how everything is conditional in the war: without a fierce battle, the Germans did not give up a single village, not a single city, not a single height ... Staying in penal boxes did not even entail a criminal record.

So what were the penal units? - asked P. N. Lashchenko and answered himself: - A chance for a stumbler, a coward, who made a mistake, an opportunity to atone for his guilt, to remove a black spot from himself, often at the cost of his own blood ... A wound received even on the first day of being in a penal unit, automatically returned the fighter to the unit to the same position, in the same military rank "[24] .

A close point of view is expressed by P. D. Barabolya, who during the Battle of Stalingrad was the commander of a platoon of the OSHR, and after the war became a professional lawyer.

P. D. Barabolya:

Much later, having already become a military lawyer (by the way, the command of the penal unit subsequently prompted me to this profession), I thought a lot about the fate of the fighters, and even older military people who became fined ... It is corrective to keep these criminals behind prison bars or behind barbed wire -labor camps and, in fact, to protect them from the disaster that has befallen the country would be frankly absurd from the point of view of reasonable logic. This idea is all the more convincing because many of them, having served for a certain time in the army or navy, already had a fairly solid military training. They, no worse than other front-line soldiers, owned modern weapons for that time, they were, as they say, "on you" with military equipment. So these "flawed" people, put them in line, could well come in handy at the front.

[...]

In the conditions of an unusual situation, people opened up faster, sometimes expressing the most secret. And I became more and more convinced: no, they, these guys, are not at all inveterate elements rejected by society. Suffice it to say that, with rare exceptions, there were no recidivists among them, and there were no "godfathers". The vast majority of military crimes for which these people "received time" were desertion, disobedience, unauthorized abandonment of the unit, and some others. Of course, I in no way justify such deviations from the oath, the law. But in fairness, it should be said: often the crimes committed were unintentional. The reason for them was either the personal laxity of a person, or an attempt to circumvent prohibitions and restrictions based on impunity. Desertion, for the most part, happened according to one "scheme": wounded in battle, hospital, home leave for a short rest, the desire to "grab" a few more days or weeks with him - maybe it will carry over. As a rule, "did not carry." (S. 355, 359)

In addition to the fact that the direction to the penal unit was an alternative to extreme measures - execution, long-term imprisonment in the camp, it gave a person a chance to regain his honest name. Do not underestimate this most important motive in human behavior in war. It is difficult to say about this better than the writer V.V. Karpov, who himself went through a penal company:

"In 1942, I ended up on the Kalinin Front, I was in dangerous alterations. He behaved in battles in such a way that he was noticed and noted by the command. Marked not with an order, not with a medal ... the first and last and highest of their (penalty boxers. - Yu. R.) award is the return of the name of an ordinary, honest, pure person before the Motherland. People usually carry such a name, not even suspecting how high it is. It is natural for them, like air or the sun. And to so

you have to get it with great difficulty - the penal must earn this name, atone for his guilt with blood, that is, be wounded or killed in battle. As an exception, it was allowed to be released from a penal company for special distinction in battles .

Similar penal formations also existed in foreign armies, both of our allies - the United States and Great Britain, and of the enemy. Characteristically, in Order No. 227, Stalin referred to the experience of the Nazi units, where, after the winter retreat, penal units and detachments were formed, and "these measures had their effect, and now the German troops are fighting better than they fought in winter."

Reference to the enemy's repressive practices cannot be considered morally justified. It is no coincidence that the military history of our Fatherland did not know examples of borrowing from the enemy such methods of coercion to conduct hostilities. But, judging by the wording of the order, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was in those days in such an emotional and psychological state that he did not consider it necessary to be distracted by such "trifles". On

September 28, 1942, the first deputy people's commissar of defense of the USSR, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov, and the deputy people's commissar, army commissar of the 1st rank, E.A. Shchadenko, announced the provisions on penal battalions and companies and their states, as well as the states of barrage detachments . Prior to this, their formation and staffing was carried out on temporary basis.

states.

Given the severity of the measures provided for by Order 227, the delay in developing a mechanism for its practical implementation is puzzling. But it dissipates when, when analyzing the actions of the military authorities, you see that the creation of penal units was far from the most important task among those that faced the Supreme High Command, front and army commanders in late 1942 - early 1943. In many cases, there was a lack of and basic performance.

An analysis of how penal units were used forced the first deputy people's commissar of defense, Marshal G.K. Zhukov, at the beginning

March 1943 to issue the following directive to the front commanders:

“Inspections of the penal units carried out by the military prosecutor’s office established that it took several months to form and staff penal battalions and companies, during which the penal soldiers sat in the rear, did not participate in battles. So, the penal battalion of the Volkhov Front was in the rear for more than six months, having only 64 penal soldiers with 100 permanent members. A significant part of the penalty box of the 63rd and 65th companies of the Stalingrad Front was also in the rear for about three months. Penal companies of the 10th Army, numbering only 30-40 people in a company, carried out chores with the second echelons. In order to use penal units in strict accordance with the order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 227 and the regulations on penal units, I order:

1. Reduce the number of penal companies in the armies. Assemble the penalized into consolidated companies and, thus, keep them in a set, preventing them from being aimlessly in the rear and using them in the most difficult areas of hostilities.
2. In the event of a significant shortage in the penal battalions, introduce them into battle in batches, without waiting for the arrival of new penalized officers from the officers in order to cover the shortage of the entire battalion.

3. Report on the measures taken”[26] .

But even after this, the instructions on the ground did not unfold immediately. So, on the Voronezh Front, the chief of staff of the front, Major General A.P. Pilipenko, gave the corresponding order to the army commanders only on March 24, 1943, obliging them “to fulfill the paragraph of the first order of the deputy NCO comrade. Zhukov, indicating which companies were disbanded and which were left, indicating their numbers and the number of fines in each company on March 1, 1943, ”to report to ... March 10.

Legally, penal units existed in the Red Army from July 1942 to May 1945. In accordance with List No. 33 of rifle units and subunits (separate battalions, companies, detachments) of the active army, compiled by the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces in the early 60s of the past century, their total number is [27] 65 penal battalions and 1048 penal companies. Until recently, it was not named in the literature. To the chagrin of fans of conspiracy theories: not for reasons of secrecy, this figure simply does not give any idea of the scale of repressive practices. Indeed, as follows from the 227th order, the number of penal formations did not depend on the number of those who "deserved" such a punishment, but on the number of fronts and armies. The latter, however, changed all the time, and as the end of the war approached, in the direction of reduction. And in the fronts and armies that continued to exist, far from all penal units survived until the Victory.

Much more "talking" in comparison with the number of existing penal units is the number of variable composition (that is, the actual penalty box). According to archival reporting and statistical documents during the war, it amounted to 427,910 people. By years: 1942 - 24,993 people, 1943 - 177,694 people, 1944 - 143,457 people, 1945 - 81,766 people[28] .

If we compare this figure with the total number of those mobilized into the Armed Forces of the USSR during the war years (including those already serving by June 22, 1941), namely, 34 million 476.7 thousand people, it becomes clear: to talk about some "decisive" role of the penalty box, which accounted for only 1.24% of all those put under arms, is simply not serious. We accept the possible objection that far from all of these millions fought. But even with the approximate size of the army and navy of 6.5 million people, the share of fines in each individual year of the war, starting from 1943, is also negligible - 2.7 % in 1943, 2.2% in 1944

and 1, 3% in 1945 Let's trace the dynamics of changes in the number of fines. So, in 1944, when all fronts were conducting offensive operations, the number of penal units and the number of their variable composition were characterized by the following indicators:

- the total number of penal battalions in all fronts of the Red Army ranged from 15 (in January) to 8 (in May), and

their average monthly number was 11, while the average monthly number of fines in one battalion was about 226 people; - the total number of penal

companies in all armies ranged from 199 (in April) to 301 (in September), and the average monthly number of companies was 243, while the average monthly number of penal companies in one company was 102 people.

Thus, at the same time, a little more than 27 thousand people were in penal formations, which is literally a handful for a multi-million army (at the beginning of 1944 - 6.4 million people).

How was order No. 227 received at the front? From the memorandum of the OO NKVD of the Stalingrad Front to the OOO NKVD of the USSR on August 8, 1942, it follows that many commanders and soldiers considered the order "Not a step back!" as an additional and powerful means of restoring order.

"Order comrade Stalin is fair And timely," the commander of the machine-gun squadron of the 20th Guards Cavalry Regiment, Senior Lieutenant Kompaniets, said at the rally. "Now I myself will, regardless of faces, call cowards and alarmists to order. The Motherland will perish, we will perish too."

Some even complained that the document was published with some delay. Military doctor of the regimental medical center of the 15th Guards Rifle Division Khandomirov:

"The order is very good, and if it had been issued earlier, then, probably, there would not have been such outrages that we had to endure ..."

Senior assistant to the head of the encryption department of the 1st Tank Army, Senior Lieutenant Baranov: "If this order had been issued by Comrade Stalin one and a half to two months ago, we would never have moved away from the river. Oskol, and perhaps they would have occupied

Kharkov. Red Army soldier of the 1034th Infantry Regiment Naiman:

“If this order had been issued at the beginning of June, our division would not have ended up in the Stalingrad region, but would have fought hard for Ukraine” [29] — .

The impressions of the order, recorded in hot pursuit, are consonant with the memoirs of front-line soldiers, made public many years after the war.

P. D. Barabolya:

All of us, from the “simple sailor” (the memoirist fought as part of the Volga military flotilla. - Yu. R.) to the front commander, then lived by order No. 227 of the People's Commissar of Defense I.V. Stalin. It is now widely and well known as a historical document that soldered the will and skill of the defenders of the city on the Volga into a single irresistible force with its strict requirements. In firm, indisputable paragraphs of the order, there was a short, like a shot, and capacious command: "Not a step back!" In the troops, it instantly acquired a living, concrete and merciless meaning: “There is no land for us beyond the Volga!” The words from “Different Days of the War” by Konstantin Simonov come to mind, which very accurately defined the very essence of Stalin’s one-of-a-kind order: “In my opinion, the main thing is that people, the people (the order was read to all troops) courageously said right in the eyes of the whole terrible and bitter truth about the abyss, on the brink of which we then sunk.

(S. 354.)

And here is a fragment of the memoirs of Army General P. N. Lashchenko:

“... We took Order 227 as a rule against alarmists and self-seekers, those of little faith and those for whom their own lives are more precious than the fate of their people, their relatives and friends, who sent them to the front ...

When order 227 came, units of our 60th Army fought off the enemy near Voronezh. The situation was extremely difficult. What can I say, half the country was captured by the enemy. We seemed to be at the limit of what was possible. No, I cannot say that there was a general panic or a general flight. Yes, they retreated, but there was no flight as such, at least in our army. The order sounded for all of us with that tocsin signal, in which there was one thing - there was nowhere to retreat, not a step back, otherwise we would destroy ourselves and the Motherland. This, I would say, is the main thing in the order, and was perceived by the heart and mind. Be that as it may, the front has stabilized along the central street of Voronezh. The enemy did not go further, - the front-line general continues. - We drove him to the west from this street. I won't say that we fought badly, but a decisive change was needed, and therefore Order 227 turned out to be timely. To defeat such a strong enemy as the Nazis, it was necessary to add in skill, and in courage, and in selflessness, and in self-sacrifice .

This is a view "from above", from the category of those that are often called general's in journalism. But the view of an ordinary soldier of that war does not differ from him either. Writer L. I. Lazarev as a cadet in July - August 1942 was in Astrakhan, where his higher naval school named after M. V. Frunze was evacuated from besieged Leningrad. In his heart, he recalled, there was gloom and an unbearable pain from the state of affairs at the front. The enemy has already approached Astrakhan, which until recently was a deep rear, the Germans took Elista, the front line stretched across the Kalmyk steppes, martial law was in effect in the city.

"We knew all this," writes L.I. Lazarev, "the order, however, struck us. I was struck by the fact that it spoke of failures and retreats with unheard-of directness and harshness, there was nothing of the kind either in the roundly vague reports of the Sovinformburo, or in most newspaper correspondence, the meaning of which

came down to the fact that everything goes on as usual, victory will be ours. It was said in the order that the population was losing faith in the Red Army, that many cursed it for giving them into the hands of the fascist invaders, while she herself draped East.

This bitter truth seemed fair to me, and the harsh harshness justified. It was clear that it had reached the edge, to the point, there was nowhere to go. Not only I was so disposed, but all my comrades, and the soldiers whom I later commanded, recalling those days, said the same thing. Very many understood or felt that it was necessary at all costs to get out of that terrible hole in which we found ourselves, otherwise death, the collapse of everything .

Is there, however, any need to prove that no even the most severe order is able to instantly change the mood of millions of people? The fact is that after July 28 the retreat of our troops, having slowed down, still did not stop. Formations and units of the Red Army continued to leave their positions, retreating in some areas for almost 150 kilometers, to the Volga itself.

The retreat, which was accompanied by the encirclement and destruction of a number of formations and units of the Stalingrad Front, could not be prevented by emergency measures taken on the direct orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The first of these was the creation in the first days of August of several barrage detachments from the divisions that had recently arrived at the front from the Far East and their deployment in the immediate rear of the divisions of the 62nd and 64th armies. The second is the operational formation of assault rifle battalions, each consisting of 929 people from the command and command personnel contained in the special camps of the NKVD, who were transferred to the most threatening sectors of the front.

But the insufficient stability of the troops was only one of the reasons for the retreat. The Soviet command (both the Supreme Command and the command of the Stalingrad Front) clearly lacked the ability to use forces and means, which at that moment it had much more than the enemy, primarily tank troops. The Wehrmacht still surpassed the Red Army in the ability to lead

reconnaissance, to mass forces and means in the direction of the main strike by weakening secondary sectors. By mid-August, they

were surrounded and defeated by seven rifle divisions, two mechanized and seven tank brigades from the Stalingrad Front, which defended the right bank of the Don in its bend.

The pace of advance of the enemy was slowed down, however, he continued to maintain the initiative. It is clear, therefore, that special departments recorded the statements of Soviet military personnel, which reflected both disbelief in favorable changes at the front and skepticism about the measures provided for by Order No. 227.

"Everything is always done twice as fast after orders," 3rd-rank quartermaster Filipchenko from the 226th rifle division said bluntly. - So it will be now. After this order, the Red Army flees from Rostov to Salsk twice as fast ... "

Glagaev, assistant chief of staff of the 6th Guards Cavalry Division, told his colleagues: "If this order had been issued earlier, we would have been defeated long ago." Subordinates did not lag behind

commanders and superiors. Speaking with colleagues, the Red Army soldier of the 23rd Guards Cavalry Regiment Filyukov said:

"The order remains an order, but when the German aircraft starts bombing, then you will have to run back. We know these orders ... "

The commander of the anti-tank rifle company from the 76th Infantry Division, Galeto, "explained" the essence of Stalin's order in this way:

"All the same, people who have fallen into penal companies will run away to side of the enemy, since they will not be able to retreat.

"The [German] drove everyone to the river. Volga, what to do then, either drown, or he will kill us on the shore, or he will take everyone to

captivity. There will be a big slaughter near the city of Stalingrad-Tsaritsyn.

These are lines from a letter from a serviceman Chechkov.

[32] And although the security agencies have traditionally characterized people who made such assessments as "a hostile and unstable element," this would be too simple an explanation for their uncertainty about the future. Despite the

cruel measures that Order No. 227 determined, there were traitors, deserters, and voluntarily surrendering in our army in the future. And not only among class aliens. It turns out that not everyone was frightened by detachments and penal companies. Great is the power of command in war. But

in order to become a reality - not a step back, something else is also required, for example, military skill, skillful leadership of the actions of the troops. On the other hand, the order of the commander, the mother of a comrade, the prospect of a penal company can add courage to the heart, and can finally knock the knees down. Here everyone asks himself, and his own judgment is the most severe.

In war, as in life in general, justice and meanness walk side by side, the exactingness of some towards themselves and the desire of others to write off their own mistakes on the one standing next to them. With great, enduring bitterness, the front-line soldiers themselves cite cases when other commanders and commissars used Order No. 227 as a cudgel, for "exemplary" punishment, so as not to be accused of softness and indulgence of subordinates.

E. L. Golbraikh:

Let me tell you about a tragic incident that happened right in front of my eyes. You know about Stalin's Order No. 227. It is pointless to argue now whether the order was good or bad. At that moment, necessary. The situation was critical and faith in victory was at the limit. The commander of the mortar company in our regiment was 22-year-old Alexander

Rims. He was a career officer and managed to graduate from a military school before the war. He knew the business well, the soldier felt sorry for him, and they loved him. Yes, and the commander was brave. I was friends with him...

Sasha led the company to the front, trying not to lose people, materiel. There were many older soldiers in the company, it was difficult for them to go in the heat with heavy 82-mm mortars on the ridge, they often had to rest. The company lagged behind the regiment for a day. But the war does not regret and does not forgive ... That day we attacked the Germans several times and did not advance a single step. I was on the phone when the division commander called. I handed the phone to the commander of the regiment. Why aren't you moving forward? the commander asked divisions.

The regiment commander began to explain something. - Have you shot anyone?

The regimental commander immediately understood everything, and after some paused, "No. - Shoot it

then! - said the commander. "This is not a union meeting. This is war.

The 227th order has just thundered. In the evening, when it got dark, the battalion and company commanders and political officers were called to the regiment commander's NP ... I had just returned from the front line, the foreman put a bowl with some kind of cold brew into my hands, and I finished it, sitting on the ground. Excited voices were heard from the NP. After the concussion, I did not hear well, I could hardly understand the words. From the NP trench, backing away, Sasha Obodov began to climb the steps. Following him, stepping on him and inflaming themselves with anger, appeared with pistols in their hands the regimental commissar, the senior battalion commissar Fedorenko, and the captain of the special department, whose name has not been preserved in my memory.

"Comrade Commissar! - in despair, still not believing in what was happening, Sasha repeated. Comrade Commissar! I've always been a good person!" Shots rang out. Shielding himself with his hands, Sasha brushed aside the bullets,

like flies. "Comrade Commissar! Tova ... "After the third bullet that hit him, Sasha fell silent in mid-sentence and collapsed to the ground. The one he so wanted to protect... He was ALWAYS a good person. He was only twenty two

years. The Germans continuously illuminated the front line with rockets and spread a multi-colored fan of tracer bullets low over our heads. From time to time mines roared dully. Nothing has changed ... The war continued ... Someone shouted: "To the party meeting!" Creeped around the party organizer. For a long time, without looking at each other, they were silent. The party organizer did not immediately speak. Literally shouted: "Comrade communists! You saw what just happened! It's better to die in battle!" So they wrote in the decision: "Fight to the last drop of blood. Die on the side...

How to determine the measure of cruelty that was necessary to win? Is it necessary? Is it always? I do not undertake to determine the measure of cruelty necessary for the Victory. Neither justify nor refute ... As D. I. Ortenberg, who

was the editor-in-chief of the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper in the first years of the war, recalled, a few days after the announcement of order No. 227, Konstantin Simonov returned from a trip to the front with poems "Nameless Field".

Again we retreat, comrade,
Again we lost the battle,
The bloody sun of shame
Sets behind us.

The first merciless, bitter lines were completely in tune with the order. But then the poet even risked entering into a certain polemic with him, disagreeing with the conclusion that the civilian population curses the soldier for putting the people under the yoke of the Nazis. This accusation against the majority is unfair, Simonov said in poetic ways, people

they retreat through force, with great, unceasing pain and the certainty that sooner or later, even at the cost of their lives, they will return the land, which is still being left to the enemy:

I know that you were not afraid of
bullets, And the life that your mother
gave you, You take care of the masculine
hope to sell it at a higher price.

You, right, were born in a shirt,
That you are still alive to this
day, And death seemed to you
less torment than this shame.

Simonov also "supplemented" the Stalinist order, declaring that, in addition to the court-martial, there is no less, and perhaps even more severe court - a man over himself. To courage generations of defenders of Russia from Peter the Great to the defenders of Przemyśl during the First World War appealed to the Soviet soldier in Simonov's poems. And here is the finale:

You hear, comrade, you hear, How the
dead are following, You hear:
not only descendants, Our ancestors
curse us for this.

We swear with you, comrade,
That no more step back! So
that the Silent shadows of soldiers no
longer follow us.[...]

Let that nameless field, Where
we had to stand today, Suddenly
become that very stronghold,

Which the Germans can't take.

D. I. Ortenberg recalled how tensely the editorial office waited whether Stalin would react to the poetic "amendments" of the order (the leader always closely followed the press). There was no gratitude, but there was no criticism either[33]. Probably, the Supreme Commander realized that the force of the order would only be multiplied if its emotional presentation was added to the strict wording of the official document. And what can be expressed by literary means is, of course, difficult to achieve with an orderly style. The psychological mood of the summer of 1942 was also reflected in Alexander Tvardovsky's Ballad of Abdication. It was about

the soldier Ivan Kravtsov, who deserted from the front and secretly returned to his home. At first, his father and mother accepted him as a dear guest, but, having learned the truth, they abandoned him, unable to live in the dishonor that fell upon them. Expelled from his father's house and leaving the village outskirts, Ivan suddenly gained the ability to look at the world as if "with eyes not his own" and was horrified by what he had done. He decides to return to his unit, although he understands that "there is no punishment for you other than the death penalty."

Go, run, hasten to where you
came from without honor,
And do not ask for
forgiveness, but ask
yourself for judgment on the spot.
And in front of the eyes of your
friends-fighters, To you full of
contempt, That sentence, Ivan
Kravtsov, You listen silently. As an
honor, accept that verdict. And
stand, and be like a warrior, Even if at
that moment, as a volley at
point-blank range Will end the
account with you. And maybe
even that court will postpone its sentence, And again they will give you a gun,

Trust again. May be...

And after July 28, 1942, the soldier Ivan Kravtsov could gain such trust in only one way - by fighting in a penal unit. As well as tens of thousands of the same faint-hearted, stumbled, punished, as they say, in the case, for specific crimes.

And more about Order No. 227. No matter how you feel about it, it is undeniable that although after its publication the withdrawal of our troops continued for some time, it marked a certain important milestone, a turning point in the spiritual and moral mood of

the troops. In this regard, one cannot but agree with L.I. Lazarev:

“And the point is not in the order itself, as it is sometimes imagined, which has become saving, but in the fact that it coincided with the mood of a great many who fought at the front. It was necessary, no matter what it cost each of us, to resist. And they stumbled. Rested in Stalingrad, Voronezh, Novorossiysk. Out of the darkness and bitterness that was in our souls (Pushkin, reflecting on what decided the matter in 1812, called it “the frenzy of the people”), and that force of resistance was born, which the Germans, who were advancing so victoriously, could not cope with, broke down ” [34] .

Born out of the emergency situation of the summer of 1942, the penal formations existed, however, even when such an emergency had passed, until the very end of the war. The retreat of the Red Army already in the course of the Battle of Stalingrad was replaced by a predominant movement to the west, but the need to deal severely, in accordance with the requirements of wartime, and at the same time fairly deal with those who stumbled remained until the last battles subsided. It is known that in preparation in 1945 for the war with Japan on the Trans-Baikal Front, officers of the 26th district school of snipers formed a permanent staff of a separate penal battalion [35] . True, he did not have to fight: because of the transience of the war, the battalion did not have time to be equipped with a variable composition.

Barrage detachments were disbanded for almost a year earlier, in October-November 1944.

... More than sixty years ago, the military storm subsided, and today, sorting through the letters with the memories of former penitentiaries, you experience some kind of previously unfamiliar aching feeling. Many front-line soldiers are no longer in the world, but their combat everyday life is harsh, full of trials - here they are, in such simple lines.

M. T. Samokhvalov:

Me and my partner Vladimir Berestovsky, a senior sergeant, were sent to the 226th separate penal company, which was formed in Kobrin. For twenty days they were on the defensive on the Pripyat River, and on June 22, 1944, they went on reconnaissance in force. At 6 o'clock in the morning they crossed the Pripyat at the very mouth of the river, and as soon as we shook off the water, the Germans and the Magyars opened heavy fire from machine guns. Our artillery preparation was delayed, our mortars opened fire with a great delay. But during this time we managed to crawl to the wire in a plastun way, my neighbor (I don't remember my last name) had two offensive RGD grenades, he threw them and broke the wire, and we rushed into the breach.

I turn on all my speeds. Sergeant (former) Stavitsky jumped out from behind the bushes to my right and started firing at the cannon from his knee. We run up: the goniometer sight and the castle were dragged off by the escaped gunners, I fill the sand into the barrel, into the breech. I run along the trench that we recaptured from the Germans, looking for the company commander, senior lieutenant Koretsky, to give him the German "Schmeisser", otherwise he went into battle with one pistol. Every 6-8 meters - machine guns, and we have one light machine gun per company. I check every one, but

there are no locks in any of them, the Magyars took everything away. I found the commander, handed him a machine gun, armed him. The senior lieutenant sends me back to the gun to help senior

Another soldier, Starichkin, is running towards us - oh, this is already strength. In less than five minutes, a German self-propelled gun appears on the left - and the battle began. The fascist hits the penalty boxes, we snap. The trench is straight, the explosion - three of ours - to death, two are wounded in the legs. Two soldiers run towards us, and the self-propelled gun began to move in our direction. The guys turn back, the Germans stop. A shooter appears from the hatch, but I get ahead of him and hit him with a rifle. He dives. A couple of gun shots, then the German appears again, I hit again, the Nazi dives into the belly of the self-propelled gun, and it turns its barrel in our direction. The Germans begin to shoot from the cannon so that, believe me, the earth began to swim under us. Then I got a portion of small fragments in the face. Starichkin bandages me and pushes me out of the trench: run, they say, to the rear. I took acceleration, and the ground is sandy, it is difficult to run. The nose was pierced, bandaged, it was hard to breathe, it hit the brain. I slide into the trench - here he is, the orderly. Well, that means everything: redeemed by blood ...

Order No. 227 provided for the direction of the offenders to penal units on an individual basis. However, the history of the Great Patriotic War knows the case when an entire regiment in full force was transferred to the category of penalties. Here's what happened. Two

regiments of the 63rd Cavalry Korsun Red Banner Division - the 214th Cavalry (commander - Guards Lieutenant Colonel E. V. Danilevich) and the 42nd Guards Cavalry (commander - Guards Lieutenant Colonel A. D. Cheglanov) stood on the defensive, as they say, a joint at the butt, striving for the stirrup. Therefore, when the enemy went on the offensive on October 26, 1944, Danilevich did not worry about the flanks. It turned out to be wrong. His neighbor Cheglanov, having received a new combat mission the day before, without publicity, withdrew the regiment from the previously occupied site.

The command of the 214th cavalry regiment was not warned about this from the division headquarters either. The Germans took

advantage of such a "gift", broke through the exposed flank and unexpectedly went to the regimental command post. In order to save the Battle Banner, Lieutenant Colonel Danilevich ordered to take it to the rear, to the headquarters of the 63rd Cavalry Division. In an unequal battle during the retreat, the s

Naturally, this unfortunate incident was reported to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. On November 23, Stalin, as People's Commissar of Defense, signed special order No. 0380. It was reminded that, in accordance with the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of December 21, 1942, the regiment commander and officers guilty of "such a disgrace" are subject to trial by a military tribunal, and the military part - disbanding[37] . But, given that the loss of the Battle Banner occurred not due to the cowardice of the personnel, but because of Danilevich's indiscretion, and that the 214th cavalry regiment had acted successfully in previous battles, the people's commissar considered it possible not to apply that decree, but went to an unconventional measure. The regiment in its entirety was transferred to the category of penal ones, and the personnel were warned that they should atone for their guilt with their military deeds. The commanders of both regiments, Danilevich and Cheglanov, were also reduced in military rank to major.

The Military Council of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, which included the 214th Cavalry Regiment, was ordered to report on the combat activities of this unit by February 1, 1945, and then decide whether it is possible to remove the punishment and reissue the Battle Banner regiment. The order of the

People's Commissar of Defense was then announced to all personnel of the Red Army. Needless to say, with what attitude the cavalry-penalists went into battle after that in order to regain their good

Name.

The military historian A.V. Moroz restored the circumstances of the further combat life of the offending horsemen according to archival data. He found out that in practice the transfer of the 214th cavalry regiment to the category of penal did not cause any punishments, except for purely moral ones. Even the awards from the personnel, as was done in penal battalions and companies, no one took away. Moreover, on the day following the announcement of NPO order No. 0380, a number of officers and Red Army soldiers received previously deserved orders and medals. Among the recipients was the commander of the regiment - now also a major - E. V. Danilevich. Order NPO No. 0380 did not oblige the command to use the regiment transferred to the category of penal regiments in the most dangerous sectors of the front, since it was always at the forefront of the offensive, on the front line. Of course, such

Turn the case could acquire only at the end of the war. A year or two before that, the guilty would not have been taken off their heads ...

In February 1945, at the request of the Military Council of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, the regiment was withdrawn from the category of penalties with the right to receive the Battle Banner again. But whether it was handed over, there is no evidence in the archive. The Central Museum of the Armed Forces, which stores more than 28 thousand banners of disbanded units, did not receive the banner (second) of the 214th cavalry regiment either. The regiment itself was disbanded in September 1945 [\[38\]](#).

Chapter

2 The enemy believes that we are morally weak

The personnel of penal battalions and the horn were divided into permanent (command, political and commanding staff) and variable (actually penalized).

Regular military personnel were unconditionally

clean before the law (that is why the penal Tverdokhlebov could not command a battalion). Moreover, they were selected, as the People's Commissar of Defense demanded, from among the strong-willed and most distinguished commanders and political workers in battles. In accordance with the Regulations on penal battalions and penal companies, commanders and military commissars of penal battalions were appointed to positions by the military council of the front, commanders and commissars of penal companies - by the Army Military Council.

E. L. Golbraikh:

Punishers have never been appointed commanders of penal units! This is no longer a bluff, but an irresponsible lie. The commander of a penal battalion, as a rule, is a lieutenant colonel, and the commanders of his companies are career officers, not penitentiaries. The commander and commissar of the battalion used the disciplinary power of the commander and military commissar of the division in relation to the penal, their deputies - the power of the commander and commissar of the regiment, the commanders and military commissars of the companies - the power of the commander and commissar of the battalion, and the commanders and political instructors of platoons - the power of commanders and political officers of the companies. The commander and military commissar of a separate army penal company used the disciplinary power of the commander and commissar of the regiment in relation to the penal, their deputies - the power of the commander and commissar of the battalion, and the commanders and political officers of platoons - the power of commanders and political officers of the companies.

Command and command personnel for penal units were not specially trained. And people from the NKVD in it were the exception rather than the rule.

M. I. Suknev:

My task is: while the battalion is on the way, to choose the best commanders of companies and platoons, as well as sergeants from the regiments of the division (in which M. I. Suknev fought before. - Yu. R.). The senior adjutant of the battalion is senior lieutenant Nikolai Lobanov, the deputy for combat and combat is capital Kukin, the commissar, that is, political officer, is Major Fedor Kalachev. Company commanders: 1st - Captain Shaturny Nikolai Nikolaevich, a Siberian from Tomsk; 2nd - Senior Lieutenant Krestyaninov; 3rd - foreman lieutenant Petrik Ivan Fedorovich and machine gun - brave Alexander Zhadan.

(S. 150.)

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

As a platoon commander of the 121st OSHR of the 40th Army, I was sent from the officer reserve of the army, where, in turn, I ended up after the hospital. I caught up with the company right on the march to the front line. He introduced himself to the commander.

- Where did you fight? he asked. -

Karelian, Stalingrad, Don fronts, -

I listed. - So,

shot? - Shot and wounded.

- All clear. Take the first

platoon ... The cannonade is thundering

closer, it seems to be approaching us. I feel that soon into battle, but I am completely unfamiliar with

his own, and unusual, unit. After all, people go not just to fight, but to atone for their guilt before the Motherland.

He moved to the head of the column and announced as loudly as possible: "Comrades! I am your platoon leader. Listen to my command!"

A. V. Belyaev:

I have been at the front since September 1941. By the end of the Moscow battle, I became chief of staff of a rifle battalion. Wounded. From the hospital he went to courses for the command staff of the Western Front in Podolsk. And from there, by order of the Military Council of the front, he was appointed assistant chief of staff of the 16th Special Operations Brigade for operational work and fought in its composition until March 1945. I know that combat, experienced officers mostly fell into the

permanent staff. For example, another OShB on the Western, then the 3rd Belorussian Front was commanded by Colonel Yakov Ivanovich Efimov, the former head of the political department of the 29th Guards Rifle Division. We also had completely past battles commanders.

I. N. Tretyakov:

I commanded a company in a training battalion when I was called to the commander of the 13th Army, General N.P. Pukhov. It was in November 1942. When the commander said that I was being appointed commander of the OSHR, I involuntarily burst out: "What have I done wrong?" (We have heard about penal companies before). The general replied: "If you were guilty, you would not have been appointed commander, but would have been sent as a private." Then he began to say that I, they say, was exchanging a second war (I happened to participate in the battles at Khalkhin Gol in 1939), had recently graduated from college and that I was a communist.

N. I. Smirnov:

It was the forty-third year. By that time I had graduated from the Kemerovo Infantry School, and we were sent to the reserve of the 47th Army. We were hot, and everyone wanted to go to the front line - they felt that the war was coming to an end. Captain Knyazev, the commander of the penal company, came to the army reserve and said that he urgently needed four volunteers. I, like many other young officers, did not hear anything about it then. He told us what we would have to do and with what contingent to work. He defined the tasks as follows: breaking through the defense, reconnaissance in force, sorties at night for "tongues". Like a real Komsomol member, I rushed to the front and did not particularly think about where exactly I would end up. I just waved my hand and agreed.

E. L. Golbraikh:

In the penal company, I asked myself. During the next reorganization, I ended up in the officer reserve of the 51st Army. It was my first time in the army rear. I was struck by the huge number of idle officers of all ranks, with a businesslike appearance, scurrying about with folders and without. Is there a job for them all? The closer to

the front, the less people. First, the rear, economic and special units, medical battalions, larger artillery, and then smaller ones, closer to the front line, the mortars, you go to the front line - a lonely feeling seizes, where have they all gone? In war, as in life, everyone knows what he should not do ... Boring. I don't know anyone, and nobody knows me. By the end of the week, I heard that the deputy commander of the army penal company had died. And I went to the personnel department ... I risked a little. The son of the "enemy of the people", except for the rifle battalion,

did not shine.

It so happened that, having learned what kind of bitter bread he was, the servicemen who deserved forgiveness did not want to part with their comrades and, with the consent of the command, transferred to the permanent composition of the penal units. This was one of the important sources of replenishment of the permanent composition of penal units in its lower link.

A. V. Belyaev:

Platoon commanders were often appointed from among the penitentiaries who had redeemed their guilt - the most caught up in combat terms, having experience in political educational work, maintaining discipline, military order and morally reliable.

I. N. Tretyakov:

There were also demoted commanders in the penal company. After serving the sentence, the command filed a petition, they were awarded the rank and left in the company as platoon commanders. Such cases are confirmed by documents.

For example, in the annals of the 8th separate penal battalion of the Stalingrad (Don, Central, Belorussian, 1st Belorussian) Front, the appointment of a newly rehabilitated officer - senior lieutenant N. Buravnikov to one of the companies as a platoon commander at his request. In March 1944, in the 1st company of the same 8th OSHB, military doctor S.P. Buzun, demoted to the rank and file, fought as a variable fighter. He was wounded, presented to the order. And

in the spring of forty-five, already on German soil, the Commander of the Order of the Red Star, Captain of the Medical Service Buzun [\[39\]](#) returned to the battalion as a doctor

On the other hand, not every military officer with a light heart went to the team or political work in the penalty area.

Part.

P. D. Barabolya:

When appointing a deputy for political affairs to my platoon, there was an unexpected hitch. When senior lieutenant Georgy Shebunyaev was named to this position, his restraint, not a novice at the front, changed. Turning purple, he hurriedly got up, suddenly somehow transformed and broken: - Comrade divisional commissar, anywhere, but

not to the penalty box. For what? Better in any other company. At least to the very front. He was sitting next to me, and in my hearts I tugged at his tunic sleeve,

exhaled: "What are you talking about? Sit down, be quiet..." Shokhin (deputy of the flotilla. – Yu. R.) sharply stopped the senior lieutenant, who suddenly

head of the political department

lost heart: "If you don't become a political officer, you will become a penal yourself. This I promise you firmly. No,

then Shebunyaev never celebrated the coward, although our platoon, like the whole

company, sometimes got into such troubles that we never met in the most "twisted" plots of adventure stories "about the war". It's just that under the influence of the past stories and tales about penal companies, their supposedly one hundred percent doom, something broke in a person, and momentary weakness splashed out. Be that as it may, subsequently with Zhora Shebunyaev we worked well together. (S. 356–357.)

Among the commanders of the penal units came across very colorful figures, skillful and successful warriors, not without

healthy adventure. Of course, the very situation of the penal formation could not but affect.

E. L. Golbraikh:

The neighboring penal company was commanded by a Jew Levka Korsunsky with the manners of an Odessa Mishka Yaponchik. Having come to visit us at a quiet moment on a chic trophy phaeton harnessed by a pair of handsome horses, he took off a chic Swiss watch from his left hand and threw it to the left, took it off his right and threw it to the right. It was a gesture! It is difficult for a modern person to explain. Watches were the object of constant desire and often served as a reward.

The penalty box regained its honest name, atoned for guilt (real or imaginary, another question) in particularly difficult conditions. But after all, next to them, the permanent composition, not stained before the law, was exposed to the same danger. "Scissors" were eliminated by the system of benefits and privileges[40] .

For the entire permanent staff, the length of service in ranks, in comparison with the commanding staff of the combat units of the army, was halved. When assigning a pension, each month of service in the permanent composition of the penal part was counted for six months. Increased by 20-25% was the salary salary.

Front-line soldiers saw other advantages of serving in penal units, for example, there was less petty control and bureaucracy.

I. N. Tretyakov:

What benefits did I have as a commander of a penal company: a) salary of 1100 rubles, 5% of service, 20% of the field -

only 1375 rubles. The commander of an ordinary rifle company received 750 rubles; b) in one year and three and a half months, they were twice promoted; c) where there was more light, they had to fight.

E. A. Golbraikh:

Our full name: a separate army penal company - OAShR. The last two letters served as the basis for the fact that the call signs of the penal companies on all fronts were the same - "Shu-Ra". But the first two letters were of particular importance. For an ordinary company, in addition to their commanders, the battalion had two deputies, a party organizer and a Komsomol organizer, and three deputies in the regiment and the same political workers, and also in the division staff and political department. And all of them, singly or in a crowd, in the lull between battles, when you want to write a letter or just relax, are to your liking to bore about clean collars, combat sheets, party and Komsomol meetings. But no one will come to the penal company. We are not them. They have enough worries of their own, and no one, especially at the front, will do more than they should. And we simply do not have a party or Komsomol organization. Full-time officers are partuchet in the reserve regiment and occasionally pay dues there. The commander of a penal company, in his rights, is equated with the commander of the regiment and is operationally subordinate to the commander of the division to whom he is assigned for a particular operation. This is included in the concept - separate. And the army is not up to us. They have more important things to do.

A. V. Belyaev:

There is no way to describe everything that I had to endure, I had to be there myself. Suffice it to say that at 23

year I became gray-haired. True, in a year and 7 months I was awarded the ranks of

captain and major. The incentive for us, officers of the permanent composition of the penal units, who went into battle along with those who atoned for their guilt before the Motherland with blood, was also a double salary, which we, as a rule, gave to the Defense Fur

Of course, the majority did not fight for benefits and advantages. commanders.

P. D. Barabolya:

It was as if the officers who commanded the units of the penalty box were not forgotten either. A month of service was counted as six months. Early promotion of titles, generous rewards, special rations, and other things in the same vein were provided. Basically, many promises remained on paper. The “special ration,” for example, was remembered for frozen canned food and daily pea soup (I still have a strong aversion to this respected dish). But all this, of course, is trifles. You could put up with the fact that you were passed over by the award, forgot about the timely assignment of the title. And really, before that, when near Stalingrad, in essence, the fate of the Motherland was being decided! (S. 360–361.)

Since the commanding staff was given many rights, a lot was asked of him.

E. L. Golbraikh:

Toward the end of the war, when no one wanted to die anymore, three people deserted at once. The company commander and I appeared “before the bright eyes” of a member of the Military Council of the Army, who, in a popular form, with the use

"folklore expressions", to make it more familiar and understandable, explained what we, in his opinion, are. He took out from some folder award lists for the Order of Alexander Nevsky for the commander and for the Order of the Patriotic War of the 1st degree for me, tore them with a graceful movement and threw them under the table, at the same time saying that the assignment of the next military ranks to us was delayed. And already in the back he threw: "Find! And sho

If the permanent composition of the penal units was assigned in the usual manner established in the Armed Forces, then the recruitment of the variable composition came from various sources, the number of which changed during the course of the

war. At first, based on the Regulations on penal battalions and penal companies of the active army, they were staffed by two categories of servicemen - those sent by order of the senior commander and convicted by a military tribunal.

Variable composition of penal battalions

Officers who belonged to the middle and senior command, political and commanding staff and were guilty of violating discipline due to cowardice or instability were sent to penal battalions based on the decision of the corresponding commander, commander. Commanders of divisions and separate brigades and above were endowed with such a right. Their power in this regard did not extend only to the commanders and commissars of battalions and regiments, who could be sent to the penal battalion only by the military tribunal of the front by their verdict. The direction to the penal battalion was issued by

order for a division or brigade (for the corps - in relation to the personnel of corps units, for the army and the front - in relation to units of army and front subordination). Without fail, all those sent to the penal battalion from junior lieutenant to colonel were subject to demolition - reduction in military rank to private (therefore, no cine Tverdokhlebov could bear the captain's rank, if he was a penal, and if he was a captain, then not a penal).

Officers were sent to penal battalions also by the verdict of military tribunals (field army and rear), provided that they were convicted with a suspended sentence[41] and the court did not deprive the officer of his — military rank. All servicemen of variable composition,

regardless of what military rank they had before being sent to the penal battalion, were demoted by the court or not, fought in the position of penal privates. This is what the variable composition of, for example, the 5th Special

Operations Command of the North-Western Front at the beginning of 1943 was like. The former commander of an artillery brigade, the regiment commander, the assistant chief of staff of the division, three assistant chief of staff of the regiment for reconnaissance fought here with the buttonholes of ordinary soldiers in tunics, four battalion commanders, 15 company commanders, including one former penal company commander, two squadron commanders, head of a border outpost, 56 platoon commanders. Blame was redeemed not only by combatant commanders, but also by the former head of the operations department of the headquarters of the partisan movement, the commander of the partisan detachment, four detectives of the special department of the NKVD, the secretary of the military tribunal of the division, the head of the warehouse, the head of the chemical laboratory, the head of the dining room[42]. Sensitive,

as it should be, to such conflicts, the literature about the war could not ignore the fate of yesterday's colonels, majors, lieutenants, who suddenly became privates. In the second book of Konstantin Simonov's novel *The Living and the Dead* (*Soldiers Are Not Born*), battalion commander Sintsov in the front-line officer reserve met an elderly lieutenant with five stripes for wounds and without a single award. I thought about him: "Probably after a free kick", comparing the bearing of a regular military man, age, rank, the presence of stripes and the absence of awards. And I wasn't wrong. In the words of a former colonel, now a lieutenant:

"Two orders, which he was previously awarded, ate a free kick. And what you earned in a penalty kick according to the law does not count, instead they gave you two dice, and thanks for that: grow back to the four sleepers from which you started!"

The situation in which the senior officer became a penalty box is also unusual - Simonov, as always, brilliantly found an interesting fate for this far from being the main character.

“Order two hundred and twenty-seven is correct, I will always say that it is correct,” the yesterday's penal private, now a lieutenant, said with conviction. And he explained: “When I beat a comrade tribunal with this hand last summer,” at these words he pulled an iron fist far from his sheepskin coat, “I, on order two hundred and twenty-seven, hoped that they would send blood to the penal battalion, but they would not imprison. And he beat for the fact that they used to know each other. He didn't explain in more detail. Said he was drunk! And he wasn't drunk.”

From the text of the novel, it must be understood that the member of the military tribunal got it for past sins: he was probably directly related to the arrest in 1937 of the owner of the “cast-iron fist”, who was released from prison only after June 22, 1941. This, by the way, is another judgment to the dispute whether the penal units gave a chance for those who stumbled to regain their spotless reputation. It should be

borne in mind that the command from the very beginning experienced difficulties in staffing such units to the full state. For example, as of December 20, 1942, out of 769 military personnel of variable composition provided for by the state, only 92 people were registered in the 5th Special Operations Command of the North-Western Front. A month later, people increased, but not by much, their number [43] amounted to 172 people

Variable composition of penalty companies

This type of penal units was completed by both former officers and former sergeants, corporals, and privates. An officer could get here only if, according to the court, he was deprived of his military rank, then he was sent to a penal company as a member of the rank and file. It is curious that it was precisely this

kind of plot that was not blacked out by vigilant censorship from Viktor Nekrasov's story “In the Trenches

Stalingrad". Maybe because the book was published in 1946, everyone had fresh impressions of the war, and the "penalty" topic had not yet been banned, or maybe for some other reason. One way or another, but it was to the penal company that the court of the divisional military tribunal sent one of the heroes of the story, the chief of staff of the regiment, captain Abrosimov. He exceeded his authority by canceling the order of the regiment commander, and drove his subordinates to attack the German stronghold in the forehead, as a result, the unit suffered heavy losses and did not complete the combat mission. When the protagonist of the story, Lieutenant Kerzhentsev, asks a colleague how the trial ended, a laconic answer follows, requiring no commentary: "They were demoted and - to the penalty box."

V. P. Nekrasov conveyed a life conflict in the story. Our "co-authors" also recall something similar.

M. G. Klyuchko:

I remember that near Koenigsberg we stopped in one of the estates. Someone brought moonshine. There were those who wanted to drink. And not only among the soldiers, but also among the officers. Nearby was a divisional communications platoon. They went there. The commander was tied up and disarmed. They had fun until the guard arrived from the neighboring part. The next morning the meeting of

the "troika". All participants were judged. The commander of our company, Captain Ryse, was demoted and sent to us, but already a penalty box ...

Unlike officers, privates and sergeants could only be sent to a penal company. This was done either in accordance with the order of the senior commander (commanders of regiments and above received such a right), or by the verdict of a military tribunal. At the same time, junior commanders were subject to demotion to the rank and file.

Regardless of whether the serviceman was sent to the penal unit by order of the commander or by a court verdict, the period of stay there was the same - from one to three months.

P. D. Barabolya:

Soon we, the newly-minted commanders, including those who were separated (they were neither convicted nor penalized), received subordinates. It was not far from Akhtub, in the village of Kilyakovka. The beautiful apple orchard, where the transfer of people took place, was fragrant with long-ripened fruits. And although battles were in full swing on the other side of the Volga, and in the evenings the distant Stalingrad sky was melted by flashes

of fires, it was still relatively calm here. The first acquaintance with the penalty box made a depressing impression. Of course, outwardly they were quite, as they say, normal guys or young, up to thirty years old, men - smiling and wary, gloomy and crafty. Most of them were wearing military uniforms. Well, just write from other illustrations for the combat charter! However, the "track record" of these people looked completely different. Military tribunals for military or criminal offenses "measured out" severe punishments for them - from five years to the death penalty. There were seven of the last in the platoon. There was something to think about. As I now clearly understand,

at that time both I, a former teacher, and my military political officer Shebunyaev judged very correctly, accepting the information received only as preliminary information. "Life, battles will show," we reasoned, "who is who." In the depths of their souls, they understood that, probably, not all of these criminals maliciously went against the law and the oath. Perhaps someone was brought to the dock by an oversight, unfortunate blunders in business, or even simply weak character. Nevertheless, we were aware that among these sixty people (and there were more than three hundred in the company) there were certainly those who could not at all be called angels. Which, by the way, was confirmed very soon. (S. 357.)

Departure to the penal unit should have been preceded (although the fighting did not always allow this) by a kind of ritual: the soldier was placed in front of the formation of his unit, after which an order was read out explaining the essence of the unlawful act committed by him. State awards were confiscated and, for the duration of their owner's stay in the penal unit, they were transferred for storage to the personnel department of the front or the army. A special Red Army book was issued to the penalized. True, it also happened that before leaving for the penalty area

the serviceman received only a certificate, on the basis of which, already in a new place, he was issued the Red Army book.

While in the penal unit, if necessary, by order of the unit, the penitentiaries could be appointed to the positions of junior officers with the ranks of corporal, junior sergeant and sergeant. The reasons why servicemen from

privates to colonels turned out to be penalized, judging by archival documents, were very different. The commander of a tank platoon of the 204th tank regiment of the

102nd separate tank division, Lieutenant P. D. Matvienko, in the Vyazma region in October 1941, was surrounded. Being wounded in the leg, lagged behind the unit. Until the arrival of the Red Army in September 1943, he was hiding, living with his family in the Poltava region.

Junior Lieutenant D.F. Trifonov from the 717th howitzer artillery regiment, when retreating from Kyiv in September 1941, was captured by the Nazis and placed in a prisoner of war camp. When the administration allowed people of Ukrainian nationality to leave the camp, he took advantage of this opportunity and got to the place of residence of his wife, where he lived until the liberation of the Poltava region from enemy occupation.

Lieutenant Colonel L. S. Yakunin, the commander

of a military unit stationed in Saratov, together with his subordinates, organized a booze in a local restaurant, as a result of which he "committed hooligan actions." Senior Lieutenant I. A. Joklo, fighting as part of the 156th Infantry

Division, was surrounded in August 1942 and then captured. After the escape, as a civilian, he lived in the occupied territory in the Kuban. Sent by the Germans to work in Germany, he fled along the road and hid until the arrival of the Red Army troops. Lieutenant S. T. Zolotukhin, a communications officer of the 52nd Guards Tank Brigade, lost a package with secret documents in

June 1944.

The commander of the foot reconnaissance platoon of the 915th Infantry Regiment, Lieutenant N. A. Bulat, received a combat mission to capture three times

control prisoner. But he did not fulfill it, either "deliberately going astray", then allowing "premature throwing of grenades, which was discovered by the reconnaissance group."

The head of the procurement group of the 65th Motorized Rifle Brigade of the Guard, Captain P. V. Denisov, who was sent to harvest grain and potatoes in April 1944, drank and squandered the entrusted property. Almost fifty days did not come to the place of service.

The deputy commander of the rifle battalion from the 71st rifle division, Senior Lieutenant M.D. Pavlyuchenko, when the unit left the encirclement in the spring of 1944, withdrew from the control of the battalion. He went out to his own at the head of a group of Red Army soldiers, which, according to the command, "grossly violated order No. 227 and discredited the rank of an officer in the Red Army."

The whimsical life paths of all these officers, who fought at different times and on different fronts, converged at one point - the penal battalion of the 1st Ukrainian Front .

memoirs of the veterans themselves.

P. S. Amosov:

I was sent to the penal battalion by order of the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, I.S. Konev, so that even the commander of our unit did not immediately find out about it. The order read: "For negligence ..."

In part - and we then acted in the Krivoy Rog direction - I handed over my Komsomol ticket and other documents. The new ID was simply typed.

The headquarters of the 15th OSHB was in Zhiganka. I had to go through the Schwartz mine, Green and Yellow Waters. Went in azimuth. The mood was heavy. But it turned out to be nothing, you can live, and there people are like people - they will joke and mourn. I was the youngest there.

For a long time I was looking for the reason why I ended up in the penal battalion. I finally decided when I read in Krasnaya Zvezda on March 5, 1983, the article "Until the last bullet", which refers to the death of the head of the political department of our 37th Army, Colonel Yemelyanov. The fact is that the German went on the counteroffensive, our units

departed. At that moment, in the Nedayvoda area, I was laying a minefield away from the road. He set up German anti-tank mines with tension fuses (there were no others). Having received inaccurate data on the location of the enemy, Colonel Yemelyanov on the "jeep" slipped past us to the Germans. To warn him, my soldier fired a burst and touched the tension wires. The mine worked...[45]

A. V. Pyltsyn:

One of the penalty boxers, Major Avdeev himself was in the recent past the commander of a separate penal company (army). It did not consist of delinquent officers, like a company in our SB, but of privates and sergeants who left the battlefield or retreated without an order, simply deserters or marauders, as well as former camp prisoners who were given the opportunity to atone for their guilt at the front.

Avdeev told how he himself was sent to the penal battalion. The company advanced in difficult conditions. During three days of fierce fighting for a large settlement, more than half of the more than five hundred fighters lost. And the foreman and clerk of the company, receiving food after the rest of the company was withdrawn from the battle, "forgot" to report losses and received food for the entire payroll of the company. There was a good supply of American pork stew, and something else, and, most importantly, a solid amount of alcohol. Well, don't give back all that stuff! And the company commander decided, since it happened, to arrange a commemoration for the dead. Yes, at the same time wash the awards that were awarded to the company commander himself, who received the third Order of the Red Banner, and the surviving full-time officers. He invited the army authorities, with whom he had good contacts, including from the intelligence department of the army headquarters, even some officers of the army tribunal and the prosecutor's office.

And soon, for "malicious deceit, which entailed a deliberate overspending of food" (this is not "spikelets" in the grain field for you!), He ended up in the dock and received 5 years in prison with a replacement of two months in a penal battalion. Didn't help just

the award received, nor the presence at the "commemoration" of representatives of the

punitive bodies. [...] I can't help telling you about one "outstanding" penalist who arrived in the platoon when we were on the defensive. I will call his last name somewhat distorted, although consonant, well, for example, Hecht. I do this on purpose. Suddenly, someday these notes of mine will somehow reach his descendants. And they will be ashamed of their ancestor, whom they considered the hero of that distant war against the Nazis.

He arrived at the beginning of July. When my deputies and I got acquainted with a copy of the verdict, a feeling of disgust took possession of us. He was convicted, as they would now say, of sexual harassment and sexual violence in a particularly perverted form. Being a major engineer, the head of some rear service in a large headquarters, and having created the opportunity for himself to eat separately from everyone, he not only forced the soldier girls who performed the duties of waitresses to bring him food, but also forced them to satisfy their needs during breakfasts and dinners. sexual whims. At the same time, Om threatened the poor soldiers that if they refused to comply with his demands, or even complained to someone, then he would have the power to drive them into a penal company (the girls did not know that women were not sent to penal units). And this was already violence and blackmail. The verdict was severe: ten years in prison with a three-month replacement for a penal battalion. And we thought it was very fair.

Introducing himself to me about his arrival in the platoon, he, seeing my lieutenant stars on shoulder straps, emphatically, even impudently called himself "major engineer Hecht." I had to remind him that he was deprived of his former title and that in order to return it, you need to try very hard. In the meantime, his military rank is here, like that of everyone who got into the SB - "variable fighter." (S. 62, 66–67.)

A. I. Bernstein:

I also happened to be demoted in the penal battalion. For me it was completely unexpected. In the spring of 1943 in

The secret part of the regiment received an order signed by the commander of the army of the air defense forces of Leningrad, Major General Zashikhin, [46], a member of the military council, brigade commissar Verov (I don't remember the third person). By this order, I was demoted to the rank and file in the penal battalion for a period of 1 month. Three

facts were blamed on me: 1. Two badly camouflaged winches, broken during enemy artillery. 2.

Investigating the breakage of the balloon cables, I did not prosecute the guilty minders. 3.

During combat duty at night at the command post of the regiment, he could not accurately report whether the last balloon had landed, and, upon repeated requests from the operational duty officer of the command post of the army

headquarters, cursed him in obscene terms. So it was stated in the order of the "troika". Both the regiment commander, Lieutenant Colonel Lukyanov, and the military commissar - battalion commissar Korshunov were shocked by the absurdity of this decision. Combat winches, damaged by enemy shelling, were located 10 km from me and were at the disposal of the detachment commander. I did not give motorists to court because it was not their fault. The last balloon was pierced by fragments during shelling and landed 2 hours later, and as for obscene abuse, all of us at the front were not angels, and it was wild to blame it in a secret order. It was even wilder to be sent to the penal

battalion ... According to the order, I was in the penal battalion, but was suddenly recalled from it, returned to my regiment, but already to the rank and position of a step lower. The order of the military council was revised. My release was achieved by the commander and commissar of the regiment. And six months later I was again reinstated in my —

rank[47]. They got into the penal company in different ways. Senior Sergeant Semyon Aria, for example, was brought there by the accident of the tank on which he fought. In the winter of 1943, his tank battalion made a night march in the area of the village of Levokumskaya in the Stavropol Territory. The officer riding ahead on the "jeep" was supposed to give a signal if a bridge of insufficient strength was encountered in front, but was distracted, and the T-34, which was moving at high speed, behind the levers of which was Aria, fell into a ravine. By order of the commander of the tank brigade, the commander of the tank, Lieutenant Kuts, and the driver were brought to trial

The fighter was sent to a penal company for refusing to take up arms. They put him in front of the line, threatened to shoot him, but he did not. The political commissar and I thought about what to do, and came up with an idea. They identified him as an orderly, so he pulled out as many of our guys from the other world as not every Fritz shot. He always walked in the forefront and remained alive. Here is your faith!

I still don't know exactly why I was sent to the penalty area. I did not see the order, and they did not read it to me. I am a sergeant, a recent graduate of the Serpukhov Aviation School, served as an aircraft technician regiment stationed in the 3rd Central Fighter Aviation Squadron of the 1st Air Army. "My" Yak-7B plane crashed while landing with an instructor pilot and a young pilot in February 1944. The commission found that the crash was due to the fault of the instructor: the belt of his jacket got into the control rudders, and the car "pecked" sharply. Responsibility fell, alas, on the "switchman".

I was in hospital no. 3990 in Alma-Ata when I received a letter from home that my father had been severely beaten by a miller. So I wanted to go to find out what happened. The patrol detained me, and by order of the commandant of Alma-Ata, they gave me 3 months of a penal company. Fought, took Kirovograd. After a small wound, he ended up in the medical battalion. I didn't want to break away from my unit, so I ran away, drove to

Moscow. This was already in 1944, in the month of February. I was detained in Moscow (I escaped from the medical battalion without documents), and again I ended up in a penal company, in the 150th Idritskaya division. In this division he fought from Velikiye Luki to Riga.

It is unbelievable that, as shown in the film "Penal Battalion", former officers, yesterday's political prisoners and criminals fought side by side in one penal battalion. And that's why.

It was forbidden to apply such a measure of punishment as sending to a penal battalion to officers who committed minor crimes and, upon conviction, who were not deprived of their military rank. The established order was legalized by the orders of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasilevsky dated August 6, 1944 No. 0244 and October 25, 1944 No. 0343, in accordance with which such officers were ordered to be used in officer positions in combat units of the current army, demoted one step[49] .

This order extended both to those who fought at the time of the crime, and to officers convicted in military districts and inactive fronts. The last - and this is significant - the command trusted so much that everyone arrived at the military unit of the active army assigned to him independently, without any accompaniment. Copies of sentences were handed out to these officers.

Who was supposed to atone for the guilt with blood as part of the penal units? Those officers who committed serious military and other crimes (murder, desertion, theft of military property, malicious violations of military discipline, etc.) were sent there, in respect of whom the court considered it possible to apply a deferment of execution of the sentence until the end of the war. At the same time, they included those convicted by military tribunals, both with deprivation of military rank, and without deprivation. In accordance with order No. 323 of October 16, 1942, if the

convicted officer was not demoted by the court, then he was sent to a penal battalion. Demotion to the rank and file and withdrawal (in the order - "selection") of orders and medals were carried out by order for a regiment, division or brigade (corps, army or front troops, respectively). In the event that the court-martial,

postponing the execution of the sentence, depriving him of his officer rank, then the demoted commander or political worker, being now a private by law, was sent to a penal company, and not a battalion. Sending to penal units convicted by military

tribunals of the active army was assigned to the commanders of the units, and in cases of conviction outside the location of their unit, to the heads of the garrisons. From the internal districts, the convicts were brought before being sent to special marching companies (or teams) at special assembly points, from where, accompanied by officers, junior commanders and Red Army soldiers, they were immediately sent to the disposal of the Military Council of the front, and from there - already directly to penal units.

Given that the documents of far from all convicted officers sent to the front indicated the length of stay in the penal unit, in 1944 a clarification was made to the guiding documents. The length of stay of such servicemen in the penal unit, if it was not indicated in the verdict, was established by order of the commander of the military unit in which the convict served, in accordance with the measure of punishment imposed by the military tribunal.

Servicemen convicted without reprieve were sent to a colony or camp, where they served their sentences. Direction from the GULAG system to the penal units - we pay special attention - the normative documents did not provide for volunteers from among the prisoners. This was all the more true for political prisoners (i.e., those convicted under Article 58), who were regarded by the authorities as unreliable. Nevertheless, in the course of the war, some of the prisoners did acquire the status of a penal.

A. V. Belyaev:

Our penal battalion was often replenished from prisons and camps. It was this bastard that gave us the most trouble: unwillingness to fight for Soviet power, refusal to go into battle, constant desertion with the announcement of an all-Union search. In battle, we had to make sure that none of them ran over to the Germans.

M. I. Suknev:

All platoon commanders, sergeants and foremen of companies are waiting for the arrival of the contingent! We are guessing: who will they send?.. The battalion - a motley crowd - was brought by the enkavedeshniki under reinforced escort and handed over to me under "personal responsibility". We get acquainted with the case of each penalty box. Among them are officers from junior lieutenant to senior (there were no captains) - about one hundred and fifty people, all convicted of "violations of military discipline", for fights, "adultery", for drowning a tank, heading "on the way" to the village to friends girls, etc. And even from our troops in Afghanistan, two lieutenants came to me who had a fight in the apartment of an elderly regiment commander because of his loving young wife. The lieutenants were given from one to three months of a penalty. As soon as this period passes or the penalty box excels earlier, we sign a document, and he goes to his regiment, puts on shoulder straps, and continues to serve.

This company is elite, I think the lieutenants will not let you down! The 2nd company was formed from 200 Gavriks - Odessa and Rostov recidivists, who were replaced by a penal battalion with long sentences in prisons and camps. Several were brought with sentences to death by firing squad. These are safecrackers, swindlers, thugs in apartments and raids, but the smartest people. Reasonable, technically educated, nevertheless such mechanisms, safes in savings banks were opened. They are 28-35 years old, physically strong. As they explained to me, an Odessa citizen is a Russian, a Greek, a Ukrainian and a Jew ... Then they told jokes - from laughter

you fall.

3rd company - Basmachi, 200 people of Tajiks, Turkmens and from somewhere else from Central Asia. All of them, as we said, "belmei", allegedly did not understand Russian at first. They were entrusted to Nikolai Shaturny, who spoke Tajik tolerably.

Each of the penalty box "passed through his hands", interrogated ... operative officer "Smersh" Dmitry Antonovich Proskurin. (S. 150-151.)

I. N. Tretyakov:

For a year and three months of my service as a commander of a penal company, I had to form and fight with nine sets of 250 to 560 people. The contingent came from convicts. The commander, according to the regulations, determined the term: a sentence of up to 5 years - 1 month of penalty, up to 7 years - 2 months, up to 10

years - 3 months. The contingent came from Moscow - Taganka prison and Stromynka forwarding - 7 sets, one set - from Transcaucasia, one more - policemen and elders from the Oryol and Kursk regions.

M. G. Klyuchko:

Only when the staff of officers was fully staffed did the rank and file from the Moscow prisons - Butyrskaya and Stromynka - begin to come to us. These were those who were allowed to atone for their guilt before Soviet society with their blood. The total strength of the company was about 300 people. There were two officers for each platoon ...

It was only during the formation of the contingent in the company that it was from former prisoners. In the future, replenishment came to us from parts

of the army, the front. The variable composition of the company, in which the military financier N.P. Shelepugin happened to serve, also mainly consisted of criminals. Replenishment was usually received at railway stations: a train approached, machine guns on the platforms in front and at the tail, and former prisoners in the cars. Soldiers and officers of the NKVD troops were the first to leave the cars, then the penalty box. They were built, roll-call was made. Someone was usually missing. Those present were handed over to the command of the company, they took responsibility for the missing on the way. Then the guards left, and life began in accordance with the internal routine, established for the military formation of a penalty profile[50] . Persons-convicted with a suspended sentence and sent to the active army could get into the penal part on completely legal grounds. One, as we have seen

above, they were escorted there from the military unit, the garrison, and by the time the sentence was passed, someone was already in prison. Having already served some time, the prisoner could petition the court for a stay of execution of the sentence and send him to the front. And the judiciary could satisfy such petitions.

The fact that criminals from places of deprivation of liberty, especially at first, ended up not only in penal companies, but even in penal battalions, was also due to the misinterpretation of legal documents by some courts.

In January 1944 (that is, after almost a year and a half of the existence of penal units), the people's commissariats of defense, internal affairs, justice and the USSR Prosecutor's Office analyzed the practice of the judiciary in applying a suspension of the execution of a sentence with sending convicts to the active army. It was found that in a number of cases such a delay was granted unreasonably - "to persons convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes, banditry, robbery, robbery, recidivist thieves, persons who already had a previous conviction for the listed crimes, as well as

repeatedly deserted from the Red Army"[51] . It was ~~this~~

kind of convicts who, in the first years of the war, ended up in the active army, including penal units. Henceforth, such actions of the judiciary were prohibited. There is no bad without

good. In such confusion, some prisoners, who were considered political, managed to escape to the front, although all their fault could lie in an ill-conceived statement, a publicly told anecdote, etc. One of these people was V. V. Karpov, who later became an intelligence officer, Hero of the Soviet Union .

V. V. Karpov:

The film ("Penal Battalion." - Yu. R.) shows a penal battalion, in which criminals, political, and private soldiers who have been fined are gathered. This did not happen and could not be... Privates who were at fault, as well as criminals, political prisoners who expressed a desire to fight, were sent to separate penal companies. Such companies were not included in the penal battalion, but were attached to rifle regiments. I,

for example, he fought in the 45th separate penal company on the Kalinin Front. It was formed in November 1941 in Tavdinlag from prisoners who were released voluntarily to go to the front. In the camp, I was serving a term under the infamous Article 58 for anti-Soviet propaganda... Criminals were put at the

head of this penal battalion invented (by the authors of the film. - Yu. R.), as well as company commanders. Again, this simply could not be. In accordance with the organizational documents, only line officers, the most experienced and promising, were appointed commanders of penal units. Anyone who violated this order would immediately find himself in a penal battalion. It should be borne in mind that a considerable

number of prisoners were able to be released ahead of schedule and get to the front, regardless of the penal units. This, first of all, concerns those convicted of minor and so-called domestic crimes - unauthorized leaving from enterprises, absenteeism and being late for work, petty theft and hooliganism. The authorities replenished the active army with them back in 1941-1942, of course, if they approached for health reasons and were politically reliable. Thus, by three decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of July 12, August 10 and November 24, 1941, more than 750 thousand people were released from places of deprivation of liberty, and in 1942 another 157 thousand people. In total, according to incomplete data, during the years of the war, the ITL and the NKVD colony were released ahead of schedule and transferred to the army through the military registration and enlistment

About 60 generals and admirals managed to break out of confinement, the names of some of them - Marshal of the Soviet Union K. A. Meretskov, army generals A. V. Gorbatov and K. N. Galitsky, Admiral G. I. Levchenko, People's Commissar of Ammunition of the USSR General Colonel of the Engineering and Technical Service B. L. Vannikov, Lieutenant General L. G. Petrovsky and P. P. Sobennikov, Major General I. S. Lazarenko have firmly

entered the history of the war. Several former prisoners from among the rank and file participants in the war became Heroes of the Soviet Union - Guards Lieutenant I. Ya. Serzhantov, Guards Junior Lieutenant A. I. Ostavnov, Privates V. E. Breusov and V. M. Efimov [53] .

Persons convicted of serious criminal (banditry, crimes against the order of government, etc.) and political crimes were not subject to early release. However, in such a huge "state" as the Gulag, whose "population" on June 22, 1941 was 2.3 million people, and even in wartime conditions, the situation was difficult.

There was, for example, a violation of the regime of detention of prisoners. According to the regulations, those sentenced to imprisonment of up to three and more than three years were to be kept separately: the first - in corrective labor colonies, the second - in corrective labor camps. In fact, according to the head of the Gulag V. G. Nasedkin (September 1943), the ITK contained "over 500 thousand prisoners sentenced to terms of more than 3 years, including for such crimes as treason, counter-revolutionary and especially dangerous", and about 50 thousand convicts were sentenced to terms of less than 3 [years in the correctional labor camp\[54\]](#) . With a high degree of probability, it can be argued that such an unprecedented "mixing" allowed some part of the criminals to be released early through mobilization into the army or sent to penal units, which would have been impossible under other conditions.

The Supreme Commander himself did not hide the fact that a certain percentage of the belligerent Red Army was a "criminal element." We also have the testimonies of practitioners.

G. S. Slyudyanin:

For the preparation of marching companies, we received reinforcements from various places of detention in Siberia. They united him in a separate battalion. Having no experience of working with former prisoners, at first they made many mistakes: they quartered them together with the entire regiment, uniformed them, like all those who arrived for replenishment (in everything new). In addition, they were armed, as required by the state: rifles, machine guns, "armor-piercing" and other weapons. As a result, already on the second day it was impossible to distinguish them from the rest.

There were a lot of different troubles at first from them. For example, they defeated a bread slicer, climbed into a vegetable store until the sentry shot one of them.

It was therefore decided to build a separate camp (dugouts) for the former prisoners. They also picked up the command staff, who had previously served in the troops and institutions of the NKVD, who had experience working with prisoners. In addition, among the new arrivals were not only obvious criminals, but also former party and Soviet workers and even officers. In many respects they were the organizers of order. There was intensive military training. Those who passed it were reduced to march companies, placed in echelons - and to the front.

Of course, it was not these people who decided the success of the war, but they brought in, and we need to talk about it.

E. A. Golbraikh:

An echelon of criminals arrives from the rear, four hundred or more people, and the company immediately becomes a battalion, continuing to be called a company. The criminals are escorted by convoy troops who hand them over to us according to the act. We don't post security. This makes a bad impression, while the confidence shown gives us some goodwill. There is a certain risk. But we are going for it. What kind of people? There are bandits, and recidivist criminals, and those hiding from the draft, and deserters, and just thieves. It happened that from the rear arrived and unjustly injured. Being late for work more than twenty minutes was considered absenteeism, they were judged for absenteeism, and the term could be replaced by a penal company. With one of the echelons arrived a teenager, almost a boy, at least he seemed so. On the way, the criminals took away his rations, he became so weak that he could not get out of the car on his own. They sent him to the kitchen.

The term of imprisonment was replaced approximately in the following proportion: up to 3–4 years in prison - a month in a penal company, up to seven years - two months, up to ten - there was no longer a term - three months. Among the convicts there were many former servicemen who were put on trial for untimely appearance in the unit and insignificant official, economic and military

crimes. Fit for military service, they were transferred to the active army, where they fought as part of ordinary units. As a rule, they were not sent to penal companies.

It was from such a contingent that the rifle brigade consisted, which Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky recalled and which many readers mistake for a penal formation. But written by an outstanding commander leaves no doubt that it was an ordinary military unit:

“In August (1942 - Yu.R.), a rifle brigade, formed from people convicted of various criminal offenses, arrived to replenish us. Yesterday's prisoners volunteered to go to the front in order to atone for their guilt by military deeds. The government believed the sincerity of their impulse. And so this brigade appeared at our front. Her fighters quickly got used to the combat situation; we have seen that they can be trusted with serious tasks. Most often, the brigade was used for reconnaissance in combat. She fought aggressively and forced the enemy to reveal his entire fire system ... The "Restless" brigade fought well. For valor in battles, most of its fighters had their

convictions removed, and many received orders and medals on their chests. Life has convinced me, - wrote K. K. Rokossovsky, - that you can trust even those

who at one time, for some reason, committed a violation of the law. Give such a person the opportunity to atone for his guilt - and you will see that the good will take over in him.

Love for the Motherland, for his people, the desire to regain their trust at all costs will make him a brave fighter .

Thus, one should not confuse ordinary rifle units, in which former prisoners fought, and penal formations, which were only partially replenished by those released on parole.

conclusions.

Chapter

3 After all, we are not just like that, we are fined

So, if immediately after the publication of Order No. 227, the penal units were staffed by servicemen of the active army, sent there on the basis of the order of the commander and on the basis of the verdict of the military tribunal (subject to the application of a suspension of the execution of the sentence until the end of the war), then, during the war, the contingent of penal soldiers noticeably expanded.

One of the new and mass sources is the servicemen of the rear military units and institutions that were not part of the active army. Order No. 323 of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, issued on October 16, 1942, declared inadmissible the situation when servicemen - deserters, plunderers of military property, drunkards, malicious violators of military discipline and "other unstable elements", convicted by military tribunals with the application of a suspension of the execution of the sentence Until the end of the war, continued to serve in their original places - in spare parts, training centers, training brigades and regiments, newly formed units, military schools, thereby actually avoiding punishment. Many of them, as part of marching reinforcements, were then sent to the army along with fighters clean before the law, bringing to the front "disorganization, laxity and, as a result, cowardice and cowardice in the face of the enemy, desertion and other crimes." Upon arrival at the front, they dissolved in the general mass and most often hid their criminal record. As a result, the court verdict did not achieve its goal, the authority of the court was undermined, discipline was loosened in the units where such

replenishment.

Order No. 323 of the People's Commissar of Defense established the following procedure for the use of a contingent of those convicted by military tribunals for military and other crimes with the application of a suspension of the execution of the sentence until the end of the war: such military personnel were sent to penal units of the active army for a period of one to three months: Red Army soldiers and junior

commanders - in penal companies, persons of command and command staff - in penal battalions.

If the period of stay in the penal unit was not determined in the court verdict, then it was established by order of the commander of the military unit in which the convicted person was located (or the head of the garrison), based on the measure of punishment determined by the military tribunal. The period of stay in the penal unit was calculated from the moment the convict actually arrived there.

If the military tribunal, by its verdict, did not demote the convict to the rank and file and did not file a petition to deprive him of his awards, these actions were carried out by the corresponding commander and were recorded in the order in part, connection.

For this category of military personnel, the stay in the penal unit and the procedure for removing a criminal record, as well as reinstatement in rank and the right to wear orders and medals, were determined, as for all penalized prisoners, by the provisions on penal —

units[56] . For all its severity, this order of the People's Commissar of Defense, like order No. 227, gave a person a chance, by shedding blood, to erase the stain from his biography in one to three months. What could be an alternative to sending to a penal unit for military personnel convicted by military tribunals for military and other crimes with the application of a suspension of the execution of the sentence until the end of the war? Only the abolition of such a delay, which automatically entailed the placement of a convict for several years in a camp. Perhaps not the best option was to keep such a delay in action, because it doomed a person to the departure of the appointed term of imprisonment after the war[57] . Of course, having got into the penalty area, the convict could die, but wasn't an ordinary fighter or commander exposed to the same danger? At the same time, this risk turned into an opportunity for the penalty box to remove the criminal record and return the former

military rank.

For the objectivity of the picture, it should be clarified that the orders of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 227 and No. 323 did not define a specific list of offenses containing signs of a crime for which a serviceman could be sent to penal units by order of the corresponding command, which caused discord and confusion in the activities of the military councils of the fronts and the corresponding commanders.

extremes. There were frequent cases of unreasonable sending to penal units of persons who committed offenses that did not pose a great public danger. To rectify the situation, an NPO order dated August 21, 1943 No.

0413 was issued, which determined a specific list of disciplinary offenses, acts containing signs of crimes, for which the unit commander had the right to send non-commissioned officers and privates to penal units without trial, when ordinary disciplinary measures were insufficient. Among them, the order called unauthorized absences, desertion, failure to comply with the order, squandering and theft of military property, violation of the statutory rules of guard duty, and others.

Similar rights were given to the heads of garrisons, who enjoyed the rights not lower than the regiment commander, in relation to the detained deserters of privates and sergeants who fled from units of the army in the field and from other garrisons. If the head of the garrison did not have the rights of a regiment commander, then he made a corresponding presentation to the commander (regional military commissar), to whom he was subordinate. To establish the fact of the crime, connections an inquiry was carried out, the direction of the deserter to the

penal unit was issued by order for the unit (garrison). The order stipulated that in cases where a more severe measure of punishment should have been applied to the perpetrator, the materials of the inquiry were sent to the military prosecutor's office for

bringing him to court-martial[58] . Thus, the —

competence of the military tribunals and the military command in sending military personnel to penal units was practically delineated. This order is also not devoid of subtle consideration of human

psychology. For these military crimes, those guilty of them would most certainly end up under a tribunal, which, in turn, could sentence them to long terms of imprisonment, and, say, deserters, to death. After the order of NPO No. 0413, potential criminals, having avoided the trial of a military tribunal, got a chance to regain their honest name through a penal company.

True, not everything is clear here. Order No. 0413 once again formalized the right of certain categories of commanders and

chiefs to independently administer justice, which contradicted both the Constitution of the USSR of 1936 and the Code of Criminal Procedure in force.

The trouble was that the existence of such a right provided an opportunity for significant abuse of power in relation to the penalty box. There were frequent cases of settling scores with recalcitrant subordinates, lynching, wholesale sent to penal units for disciplinary offenses during periods of difficult situation on the fronts. As a result, the number of penal units exceeded that determined by order No. 227, exceeding it by 2-3 times. Here is one of the examples contained in the review of the military tribunals of the Western Front on the practice of applying

NPO order No. 0413 in 1943: "The case of the execution of three Red Army soldiers of the 61st penal company looks especially ugly. This company did not go on the attack, 4 days after that, when the company was withdrawn to the rear, the first three Red Army soldiers who came across were shot by order of Colonel Razumovsky.

The command staff of this company did not know the personnel, there was no record of him in the company. In mid-October, several penalty boxers went over to the side of the Germans. The investigation has so far been unable to establish either the number of those who have crossed over, or their names"[59] .

A necessary condition for the application of a deferment with a referral to a penal unit was the suitability of a serviceman for military service, the ability to perform military duties in the conditions of the army in the field. This circumstance was also not always accepted.

into account.

So, by a military tribunal of the rear guard troops of the North-Western Front, he was sentenced to 8 years in prison with the use of approx. 2 to article 28 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR Red Army soldier Chunenkov. At the same time, the military tribunal did not take into account that the soldier was sick with a duodenal ulcer and was partially fit for military service and therefore could not be sent to the

front. The military tribunal of the front, given the unsuitability of Chunenkov for military service, excluded approx. 2 to Art. 28, and determined the measure of punishment conditional.

In the course of the bloody war, the Red Army, of course, experienced difficulties with the draft contingent. When the Soviet

troops moved west and began mass liberation of previously occupied lands, it became possible to put the local male population under arms. For this, not only citizens who had reached military age during the years of occupation or who were not drafted in 1941-1943 were suitable. for good reasons. Such a source of replenishment of penal units appeared as a contingent of prisoners of war released from fascist captivity, as well as encircled people who fell behind during the retreat from their troops and remained in the occupied territory. And not only lived quietly, without publicity, under the guise of local residents, but also fought in the partisans, striking at the enemy from the rear.

The attitude towards these people was determined by the above-mentioned order of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command of August 16, 1941 No. 270. In many ways, it was unfair, which could not but be reflected in the memoirs of the front-line soldiers.

I. I. Korzhik:

In September 1943, after the liberation of the city of Pereyaslav by our troops, our partisan detachment named after Chapaev was disbanded. Part of the partisans went west, and we, several dozen officers, were sent to the city of Ryazan, as it turned out later, for a special check. And then by the decision of the military tribunal - all to the penal battalion. All these officers, from junior lieutenant to colonel,

at one time ended up in the Kiev encirclement. What is their fault? That they did not [60] shoot themselves, although the order of the Mehlis required this. After three-month check, they all turned out to be "clean" - they did not cooperate with the Germans, they were not traitors to the Motherland. It would seem that the smartest thing was to send them to military units according to their specialty, but ... There were 1,200 officers in the battalion, including 25 colonels, who were made ordinary in their old age. We were all given Red Army books. In mine it was written: title - art. lieutenant, position - the first number of a light machine gun.

A. V. Pylytsyn:

It was then that our battalion was involved in the liquidation of the Rogachev bridgehead of the Germans and the capture of the city of Rogachev (in the winter of 1943 - Yu. R.).

In the period preceding this event, after heavy fighting near Zhlobin, the battalion was on formation in the village of Maiskoye, Buda-Koshelev district. The replenishment of the battalion went very intensively. And not only due to the offending combat officers. There was also a significant contingent of former officers who found themselves surrounded in the first years of the war, who were in the occupied territory and did not participate in the partisan movement (we called them the general word "encirclement"). There were also a small number of former prisoners of war officers liberated by our troops from German concentration camps or who had escaped from them, who had passed the appropriate checks in the Smersh (Death to Spies) authorities. Policemen and other accomplices of the enemy were not sent to the battalion. They were destined for a different fate.

Recently, some of our historians have stated that, in accordance with Stalin's order, all former prisoners of war and encirclement were driven into Soviet concentration camps, all prisoners of war were declared enemies of the people. The fact that our penal battalion was replenished with this category of penalized ones suggests that such statements do not always reflect the truth.

It is known that former prisoners of war - officers who did not stain themselves with cooperation with the enemy, were sent to penal battalions. True, in the majority, not by the verdicts of military tribunals, but by the decisions of the army commissions, which were guided by the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of August 16, 1941 No. 270, which qualified the surrender as treason. The only trouble was that these commissions rarely distinguished who surrendered, that is, voluntarily went over to the side of the enemy, even in a critical situation, and who was captured, either being wounded or shell-shocked, or due to a tragic combination of other circumstances. And if it was lawful to apply punishment to the former for their guilt before the Motherland, violation of the oath, then the latter actually
did not

had no guilt before their people. Here the facts of equating one to the other seem unfair to me. But what was, was. Once, probably, these commissions had to get to the bottom of truth.

By the way, then some part of the guilty military officers were also sent to the penal battalions without consideration of their misconduct or crimes in the tribunals, but simply on the orders of the command of the formations from the corps and above. This decision to expand the power of the commanders of large military formations, perhaps, can be considered justified, but only in individual cases. (S. 29.)

All those who were captured and surrounded by the enemy were checked by a commission of the Military Council of the front. For example, at the 1st was ^{from} Belorussian, she is the chairman - a representative of the political department of the front and two members - the senior security officer of the counterintelligence "Smersh" at the 29th Separate Regiment of the officer reserve and the deputy commander of this political regiment.

After the approval of the protocol with the conclusions of the commission by the front commander and a member of the Military Council, he acquired the force of

an order. Who was forced to wash away guilt (was it?) with blood? Zhdanov Petr Grigoryevich - military technician, head of the weapons workshop of the 77th rifle regiment of the 10th division of the NKVD, candidate member of the CPSU (b). We quote the protocol:

"In the Red Army from 1933 to 1934, and since 1939, has 2 wounds. 08/03/1941 was surrounded with a group of 30 people near the village Pod vysoko and was wounded. Having reached Pervomaisk, then to Nikolaev, he turned back to his city. He arrived in Bykhov on 10/20/41 and lived until 10/4/43, doing agriculture. On October 4, 1943, he joined partisan detachment No. 152 of the 11th brigade, where he was a platoon commander until joining units of the Red Army on February 24, 1944, after which he was sent to the 58th Army Reserve Rifle Regiment. There are no documents confirming the veracity of the above. Send P. G. Zhdanov to a penal battalion for a period of 1 month .

And such people, who were surrounded not of their own free will, but who did not reconcile with the enemy, only in one protocol dated May 16, 1944 - 52

names. Hypertrophied vigilance turned into human dramas. In the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, I happened to see a lot of "lists-protocols" of a survey of officers who individually left the encirclement, escaped from captivity or lived in the temporarily occupied territory. Accompanying standard conclusions such as: "adapted to the occupation regime", "showed weakness in the fight against the invaders", packs of officers were sent to the penal battalion as privates. The front was suffocating without professionals command line.

Such people, of course, were especially bitter about their actual equalization with deserters detained in the liberated territory, persons who were with the Germans in the police and other services, captured by collaborators (Vlasovites, soldiers of the Eastern Legions, etc.), who came with guilty by members of gangs operating in the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. The authorities also considered it possible for the latter to join the ranks of the active army, provided that there were no serious crimes behind them. At the suggestion of the Chief Military Prosecutor's Office, it was decided to send them to penal companies, which at the same time was a measure of punishment and made it possible to expand the conscription base.

"All these persons," said the report of the head of the special affairs department of the GVP Strekovsky, "can be quickly checked by interviewing the local population and then, in the absence of data on their recruitment, betrayal or other moments, transferred to the Red Army, sent to serve in penal companies "[62] .

The proposal was accepted and formalized in the form of a joint directives of the NKVD / NKGB of the USSR No. 494/94 of November 11, 1943

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

I must say that the formation of penal companies in our 40th Army after the events on the Kursk Bulge proceeded quite quickly. The main replenishment was given by deserters. Where did they

come from? In the spring of 1942, as a result of a successful but ill-conceived offensive by our troops up to Kharkov, a large number of the male population remaining there was called up by field military registration and enlistment offices at the reserve regiments from the liberated regions and districts. For example, only about 12,000 reservists were mobilized from the Graivoronsky district alone. However, our troops did not hold their positions and began to retreat, taking recruits with them. During the turmoil, many fled to their huts, which ended up on enemy territory.

After the Kursk Bulge, the 40th Army again advanced in the same places, the field military registration and enlistment offices again worked, and the deserters were called up again. The previous documentation on them was preserved, so it was not difficult to establish the fact of the crime. Without trial, by order of the regiment commander, 3 months of a penal company were determined as such, which corresponded to 10 years in prison. So a team of 200-250 people was recruited and transferred to a penal company.

Specific examples of crimes and misdemeanors for which commanders sent their subordinates to penal units can be gleaned from published documents. An example of exactingness was shown by the Supreme Commander himself.

In early September 1942, I. V. Stalin received a memorandum from his first deputy army general G. K. Zhukov, GKO member G. M. Malenkov and deputy people's commissar of defense for aviation, commander of the Red Army Air Force, Lieutenant General Aviation A. A. Novikov, which cited the facts of the "shameful behavior" of fighter pilots - evading air combat. Based on it, on September 9, Stalin signed order No. 0685, in which he stated that on a number of fronts - Kalinin, Western, Stalingrad, South-East and others "our fighters not only do not engage in battle with enemy fighters, but avoid attacking bombers. When performing the task of covering attack aircraft and bombers, our fighters, even with a quantitative superiority over enemy fighters, evade combat, walk to the side and

allow to shoot down our attack aircraft and bombers with impunity "(so in the document. - Yu. R.).

Fighter pilots evading combat with an air enemy were ordered by the People's Commissar of Defense to be tried by a military tribunal and sent to penal units "into the infantry". People's [\[63\]](#).

Commissar of Defense, head of the GlavPU of the Red Army A.S. Shcherbakov. Despite the sufficient amount of food, the personnel of a number of military units did not receive hot meals for a long time, dry rations were given out cut, some products were arbitrarily and without special need replaced by others (meat - egg powder, vegetables - rye flour), food was plundered. People sometimes simply starved, cases of alimentary dystrophy and even starvation became widespread. As the newly appointed commander of the front, Colonel-General A. I. Eremenko, recalled, in the first quarter of 1943 there were 76 cases of death from exhaustion. Officials, including the head of the sanitary department of the front, instead of

putting things in order in the supply and ensuring the safety of products, argued that dystrophy and death occurred due to the low calorie content of the ration [64] according to the results of the work of the commission of A. S. Shcherbakov, responsibility for the "major shortcomings in the organization of food for the Red Army on the Kalinin Front" was assigned to the front command (commander - Colonel General M. A. -

Purkaev, member of the Military Council - Lieutenant General D. S. Leonov), members of military councils of armies, commanders of divisions, regiments, battalions and their deputies. Organizational conclusions followed. Even before the completion of the work of the GKO commission, Colonel-General M.A. Purkaev was removed from the post of front commander and transferred to the Far Eastern Front. By order of NPO No. 0374 dated May 31, 1943, I. V. Stalin reprimanded Lieutenant General D. S. Leonov, and

Major General P. E. Smokachev "for a criminal attitude to nutrition

Red Army men" removed from the post of a member of the Military Council of the front and the head of the rear of the front and brought to trial by a military tribunal. The military council of the front (it was headed by Colonel-General A.I. Eremenko) was ordered to identify the persons in command, "guilty of interruptions in the food of the fighters or the lack of food for the fighters", and send them to penal battalions and companies[65] .

With a harsh order (No. 0023 of June 7, 1944), I. V. Stalin also reacted to an emergency that happened in May 1944 in a military echelon that was on its way to the front with marching reinforcements from the 6th reserve rifle division of the Kharkov military district . At the Krasnoarmeyskaya station, soldiers picked up an unexploded mine, which was used as a cleaver when preparing fuel for a fire. There was an explosion, killing and injuring 13 servicemen. Criminal negligence with ammunition has become only an extreme form of expression of the outrages that were happening in the echelon. All three days that the echelon was at the station, the personnel drank, arbitrarily left for the city, traded and exchanged service uniforms. People were abandoned: the officers accompanying the echelon were accommodated in a separate carriage and did not conduct any work with their subordinates, did not take measures to restore order. He himself was the first to suffer from this: massive violations of military discipline inevitably resulted in the beating and disarmament of officers.

According to the order, the commander of the district, Lieutenant General S. A. Kalinin, who already had a reprimand for the lack of proper order [66] in the spare parts of the district, was removed from his post — , and put on trial, the commander of the 6th reserve rifle division, Major General Kovalenko, got off with a reprimand with a warning about incomplete official compliance (it helped out that he was appointed division commander only the day before and was ill during the formation of the echelon). The officers of the train for inaction were demoted and sent to the penal battalion. The sergeants and privates were divided into two categories: the direct perpetrators of the violation of discipline were brought to trial by a military tribunal, and the rest were sent to the penalty area.

[67] — .

company From I. V. Stalin did not lag behind and his deputies in the NPO of the USSR, who had the right to issue orders on behalf of the people's commissar of defense.

Deputy People's Commissar for Chemical Defense and Guards Mortar Units, Major General of Artillery V.V. - due to the "criminal attitude of the driver, command and political staff of the regiment to valuable and acutely scarce military equipment" up to 80% of military and transport vehicles were disabled. He ordered a member of the Military Council of the Guards Mortar Units of the Front, together with representatives of the Special Department and the Armored Directorate, to immediately conduct an investigation, according to the results of which those guilty of deliberate damage to vehicles should be shot before formation, and those guilty of negligent attitude to entrusted military equipment should immediately be sent to penal units. He demanded that the same measures be applied to those responsible for disabling equipment in the future, bringing the text of the order to the entire command, political and command staff, as well as the drivers of the Red Army Guards mortar units[68] . In November 1942, the Deputy People's Commissar of

Defense of the USSR, the head of the Main Directorate for the Formation and Staffing of the Troops of the NCO of the USSR (Glavupraform), Army Commissar of the 1st Rank E. A. Shchadenko categorically forbade the commanders of military units and formations to send for re-examination of military personnel recognized by medical commissions as fit for service, but continuing to declare themselves sick, without a preliminary thorough examination by their doctors of parts. "If it is established," it was said in Order No. 0882 of November 12, 1942, issued on this occasion, "that the serviceman is feigning illness and self-harm, he will be brought to trial, and the convicts will immediately be —

sent to the penal units of the army in the field"[69] . Another order of the NPO of the USSR dated December 4, 1942, this time signed by the Deputy People's Commissar, head of the Main Political Directorate, Colonel-General A.S. Shcherbakov, concerned the punishment of officials of the military-political school named after. M. V. Frunze, who disregarded the satisfaction of the material and domestic needs of political workers who w

contentment in the specified school. Truly, one's hair stands on end when one reads an order: was this really possible not in some godforsaken garrison, but, as they say, "under the wing" of the Main Political Directorate?

However, it was. "The nutrition of the personnel is organized very badly," the text of the order said. - The dining room of the military office, serving political workers, was a run-down tavern full of garbage and dirt. The quality of the prepared food is low. There were only 44 plates for more than 2,000 people eating in the canteen. As a result, incredibly large queues were created, in which political workers stood idle for many hours every day, receiving breakfast at 15-16, lunch at 4-5 in the morning, and there was no time left for dinner ...

The personnel of the reserve were in exceptionally ugly living conditions. The hostel premises were kept in an unsanitary condition. Many political workers slept on the dirty floor, on bare bunk beds, without bedding. Systematic washing of people in the bathhouse, sanitation of the premises were not carried out. Bed bugs spread in the hostels, people got lice. Many political workers did not have overcoats, boots, waist belts, while the warehouse of the school had all these things. But most of the "reservists" arrived from hospitals after being wounded and, it would seem, needed special care and attention. As a result, the head of the school, brigade commissar

Lebedev, and the head of the political department, senior battalion commissar Rusanov, lost their positions. But the business executives suffered the main punishment: the assistant to the head of the school for logistics, Major Kopotienko, and the head of the clothing supply, senior lieutenant of the commissary service Govtvyanytsya, were removed from their positions and sent to a penal battalion[70] . In January 1943, in January 1943, Deputy People's Commissar of Defense, head of the—

Glavupraform of the NPO of the USSR, army commissar of the 1st rank, E. A. Shchadenko, demoted a soldier of the 1082nd rifle regiment, junior lieutenant S. O. Karamalkin. In a letter to Krasnaya Zvezda, and then when he was called from the front to Moscow, he, as stated in the order, tried to build on everyone

their superiors, starting with the company commander and ending with the front command, "false accusations." He "unfoundedly stated that many commanders made their way to command positions only in order to enjoy high authority and save their own skins", while he himself, having received a barely noticeable scratch on his arm, hurried evacuate to [the rear](#)^[71] .

Separate officers were sent to the penal battalion and the First Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov. So, by order No. 0112 of April 29, 1944, for a period of two months, the commander of the 342nd Guards Rifle Regiment of the 121st Guards Rifle Division of the Gomel Red Banner Guard Lieutenant Colonel F.A. leaving favorable positions to the enemy and not taking measures to restore the situation, for cowardice, false reports and refusal to

fulfillment of the assigned combat mission"^[72] .

The regiment commander actually behaved unworthily: for half a day he reported upstairs that he had begun to clear the height left without an order from the enemy, while he himself was inactive, although, according to the conclusion of the marshal, he had enough forces and means to complete the task. For a greater educational effect, the order was announced to the entire officer corps of the army in the field, up to and including the battalion commander.

According to other orders of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR and his deputies, issued after July 28, 1942, it is possible to outline an approximate circle of potential fines, which included not only military personnel, but also the civilian population. These are citizens who evade labor service in wartime to carry out defense work, procure fuel, protect communication lines, facilities, communications, electrical networks, etc. These are officials of the commissary service, through whose fault the fighters and commanders were poorly equipped . These are the perpetrators of poor-quality or "sabotage" mining, as well as blowing up our troops on their own mines. These are servicemen who arrived at the medical institution without identity documents and reported incorrect information about themselves. These are workers, employees and engineering and technical workers close to the front.

districts transferred to the position of mobilized, but arbitrarily left the enterprises and institutions to which they are assigned, or evaded mandatory evacuation, as well as heads of enterprises and institutions that did not provide an organized and complete evacuation. These are officials of the ground units of the fronts and military districts, guilty of uncontrolled spending and neglected accounting of fuels and lubricants. These are builders of civilian personnel, employed in the construction of defensive lines by the bodies of the NPO of the USSR and therefore transferred to the position of being in the ranks of the Red Army, in case they commit a crime. These are those liable for military service who evade military registration or conscription for military service. These are servicemen convicted of selling items of clothing allowance. These are the commanders of subunits and units who did not provide protection for trophy property, as well as direct plunderers of trophies. These are military personnel who illegally arrived from the army in the rear of the country in order to purchase food and industrial goods. These are the military commissars and heads of the military registration and enlistment offices, who did not ensure the safety and legal use of the forms of military documents - military tickets, booking certificates and certificates of exemption from general military duty. These are officials of the railway troops who, during the restoration work, violate the lines of operational communication. These are the leaders of the military medical commissions of the rear districts, who illegally granted deferrals from conscription for mobilization for military service. These are officials who allowed the gifts of the Red Army, which were received from the population of the country, to be squandered. These are the wounded and sick, who arbitrarily arrived at hospitals located at the place of their former residence (the order of the NPO required that such servicemen be considered deserters and, after being cured, be sent to penal units) [73] .

In accordance with NPO orders, all of them were either sent directly to the penal units, or had a high "chance" to get there as well, since they were tried by a military tribunal or subjected to serious disciplinary sanctions.

The veteran of the Great Patriotic War I.F. Chernyavsky recalls:

“In the memory of my brother-soldiers of the 232nd mortar regiment of the 11th mortar brigade of the 12th artillery division of the breakthrough of the Reserve of the High Command, the case was preserved when the private of our regiment, the Red Army soldier Max, repeatedly noted by the command of the regiment, in a heavy battle near Maloarkhangelsk in the Orlovsky direction in 1943 . knocked out a German Panther tank from an anti-tank rifle, in a close bayonet fight destroyed a German officer who distinguished himself while crossing the Dnieper River, later ended up in a penal company. He was always impudent with the commanders, allowed cases of disobedience several times, and on vacation, where the regiment was assigned for a short time, he committed looting in relation to the civilian population, for which he was convicted by a military tribunal and sent to a penal

company. Privates and sergeants, knowing the difficult nature of Max, could not understand the commanders and political workers who took disciplinary and educational measures against him, but when he disgraced the regiment with his last act, they accepted the tribunal's verdict with understanding .

It should be borne in mind that the circle of potential fines was not exhausted by the categories of military personnel and civilians mentioned above, since military tribunals condemned persons who had committed other military crimes, the composition of which was provided for by the entire spectrum of laws in force, applying a suspension of execution of the sentence until the end of the war. In this case, this category of convicts was also sent to penal units.

N. Tarasenko:

The front-line fortune treated me unfavorably in December 1944. When the unit moved from one sector of the front to another

during the night, along with my duffel bag with simple belongings, three orders-instructions for the medical care of personnel were stolen. The most valuable secret in terms of content was classified as "Secret".

After the procedure of inquiry, interrogations, etc.,

carried out in part, with the definition of "guilty of the loss of secret documents," I appeared before a military tribunal. Verdict: Guilty. He is sent to serve his sentence in a penal battalion. Address: Instenburg, East Prussia. Among my brothers in trouble, I remember two. One - the captain, the

commander of the airborne parachute company, with a decent "iconostasis" on his chest, was convicted of parachutes burned in a fire. The second, also a captain, the commander of a rifle company, shot the alarmist during the attack. Front-line soldiers know what an alarmist is in a difficult battle.

The practice of replacing imprisonment in a camp or prison with a referral to a penal unit was widespread. By joint order of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense Marshal A. M. Vasilevsky and the People's Commissars of Internal Affairs, Justice and the USSR Prosecutor No. 004/0073/006/23 ss dated January 26, 1944, a unified procedure was established for applying a deferment of execution of the sentence with the direction of convicts to the active army. Firstly, courts and military tribunals were categorically forbidden to apply a reprieve to those convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes, banditry, robbery and robbery, to recidivist thieves, to persons who had already been convicted for the crimes listed above, and also repeatedly deserted from the Red Army. In other categories of cases, the courts and military tribunals, which decided on the postponement of sending the convict to the active army, were asked to take into account the personality of the convict, the nature of the crime committed and other circumstances of the case. Postponement of the execution of the sentence with the direction of the convict to the front, the judicial authorities had to stipulate in the verdict itself.

Secondly, the courts and military tribunals were ordered to apply the suspension of the execution of the sentence only in relation to those persons whose peers were drafted (mobilized) into the Red Army.

Thirdly, the procedure and specific terms for identifying those convicts who, for medical reasons, could be sent to the active army were determined. The district (city) military registration and enlistment office, having received from the head of the place of detention a notice of the entry into force of the sentence in relation to a particular convict, was supposed to conduct a medical examination of the convict at the place of his detention no later than within three days. Fourthly, it was found that all such convicts are sent only to penal

units. Although, as mentioned above, before that, ordinary rifle units could also be equipped with them.

The military registration and enlistment offices accepted persons found fit for service in the active army in places of detention on receipt and independently sent them to the penal battalions of the military districts. Here, at collection points, the penalized (and the convicts were already such, although the period of stay in the penal unit was determined later, directly at the front) was kept under guard. Groups of convicts transported from places of detention to collection points, and from there directly to penal units, were sent accompanied by experienced and energetic officers, sergeants and Red Army men capable of maintaining strict order and discipline along the way. The commanders of the troops of the military districts and the heads of the garrisons were responsible for this.

Those people to whom a preventive measure not related to detention was applied were sent to the active army through the military registration and enlistment offices. Military registration and enlistment offices received information about them from the courts in the form of a copy of the verdict, and the courts themselves, immediately after the verdict was passed, took away from the convicts a signature to appear in the military registration and enlistment office.

The military registration and enlistment offices notified the court or military tribunal that passed the sentence on persons declared unfit for service in the active army (from among those sentenced to a measure of punishment, both related to detention and not related), within three days. In this case, the latter immediately issued a ruling on the cancellation of the suspension of the execution of the sentence and turned it into execution[75].

The circle of fines was not limited to convicts. As mentioned earlier, the commanders of divisions, brigades and above could direct their subordinate middle and senior command,

political and commanding staff into penal battalions, and commanders of regiments and above - ordinary and junior command staff into penal companies. Let's

be frank: when sent to penal units as a disciplinary measure, there was a high element of subjectivity. In practice, it is very difficult to balance the nature of a misdemeanor, an offense with the degree of punishment. Those who served in the army inevitably encountered such a phenomenon in disciplinary practice, when almost any commander, boss is inclined to punish more severely than they could. It is usually believed that "you can't spoil porridge with butter" and a more severe penalty is more likely to leave a trace in the nature of the punished person necessary for correction. "Which of us," recalls front-line writer L. I. Lazarev,

"didn't hear at the front from a certain type of superiors ("cleavers," we called them) the roar that became a common saying: "You will go to the tribunal!" According to the front-line soldiers, in this sense, many abuses were committed. And not only at

first, when, after order No. 227 was published, other commanders and "special officers" undertook to zealously carry it out, sending "those guilty of cowardice or instability" to penal units, or even shooting them on the spot. This happened later as well.

A. I. Bernstein:

The words "penal battalion" or "penalty" from the moment the order appeared became a scarecrow, and later a fashion for senior commanders to remind juniors of their place ...

Order No. 227 was read to the troops. I myself then - the captain, engineer of the regiment - explained the order to subordinates in the ranks in relation to the tasks that the regiment

performed: - the balloon is not ready to rise and repel the raid of enemy aircraft - it means that you retreated

in battle; - the combat vehicle failed - you did not follow the order;

- unauthorized absence, sleep at the post, loss of weapons or equipment, not to mention crossbows - this is a violation of order No. 227, and hence the tribunal and, possibly, a penal battalion or penal company (to each his own).

At that time, the commanders of aviation, naval, technical, anti-aircraft artillery and other units "customized" their "internal" violations to the retreats in battle and panic stipulated in the order. Already in the middle of

1943, the course of the war began to change significantly for the better for the Red Army. The defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad, the breaking of the blockade of Leningrad and other successes raised the morale of our army. Panic and retreats in battle, cases of crossbows, evasion of battle have already become rare ... And a slightly different contingent of fines has already appeared, sent to serve their sentences for other reasons and often without a court tribunal ...

For immoral deeds, fine companies began to be used. It was announced that venereal diseases would be considered as deliberate self-mutilation for leaving the front to the hospital, and this would end with a penal company. As for the privates

and sergeants, the commanders widely resorted to the right granted to them to send subordinates to a penal company as a disciplinary measure. And not always justified. The military prosecutor's office revealed a lot of facts when a private or a sergeant was penalized for minor offenses - bickering, being late for duty, and the like.

E. A. Golbraikh:

Any regiment commander had the right to send a soldier or sergeant to the penal company by his order. The escort brought an extract from the order, received a "signature in receipt" - that's all the formalities.

Why were they sent to the penal company? Failure to comply with an order, manifestation of cowardice in battle, insulting a senior commander, a fight,

theft, looting, AWOL, or maybe just PZH (similar to a field wife) did not like the regiment commander, and so on and so forth ...

Alas, there was also such a shameful phenomenon as settling scores with subordinates. Participants in the war remember this with particular annoyance and bitterness.

A. I. Bernstein:

In the summer of 1943, an order from the commander of the army arrived in our regiment, according to which, for the poor maintenance of small arms (rifles) and the lack of two rifles, the commander of the 4th detachment of our 11th regiment of barrage balloons, Captain V. Grushin, was demoted to privates and sent to a penal battalion for a period for 1 month. Grushin was one of the most experienced and respected commanders in the regiment, who had not had any comments or penalties before. His unit was always combat-ready. For the officers of the regiment it was clear that the head of the barrage balloons of the headquarters of the Leningrad Air Defense Army had settled accounts with him. As for the internal state of rifle barrels, throughout the regiment there were rifles that had gone through the Soviet-Finnish war, partly captured, including English and others, in a word, fairly worn out, with a rash in the barrel channels that could no longer be removed. The officer who checked small arms in Grushin's detachment was sent from the army headquarters. Vasily Ivanovich Grushin never returned from the penal battalion. Such senseless losses in war are especially bitter. The question of where servicemen of

other branches of the Armed Forces other than the Ground Forces were "corrected" needs clarification. Pilots, as follows from a number of orders

of I.V. Stalin (one of them - No. 0685 of September 9, 1942 is given above), were sent to rifle units. Only in the 8th OSHB of the Stalingrad (Don) Front, from the moment it was staffed and until December 30, 1942, four flight commanders, two squadron navigators, eight aircraft technicians, and two flight mechanics had a chance to fight.

The fact that servicemen of the Air Force served their sentences in ground penal units are confirmed by the participants in the battles themselves.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

Among the penalty boxers, the former captain, pilot, also with an unusual surname, Smeshnoy, was distinguished by great zeal in mastering the peculiarities of infantry combat operations. He was a tall, calm, relatively young blond ... Ridiculous got into a penal battalion because he, the commander of an air squadron, a combat pilot, who already had three orders of the Red Banner of War, overtaking brand new fighters with a group of pilots through the air from an aircraft factory to the front, allowed a plane crash. One of his subordinates, either deciding to test the car in an illegal mode in flight, or simply not coping with it in the air, crashed it and died himself. Here the squadron commander thundered into the penal battalion. In

those extremely stressful days, Ridiculous infantry science diligently comprehended, training in dashes and crawls to exhaustion, as he himself said, "to a dull pain in his overworked shoulders and buzzing legs." He was as persistent as he was patient. I wanted to know everything, try everything. Being in a platoon of machine gunners, he learned to shoot accurately from an anti-tank rifle, from a machine gun. Before everything he had to do. Everything, he thought, could come in handy in battle. He even managed to master accurate shooting from captured "faustpatrons" (or, as they began to be called, "panzer-faust") at a burned-out German tank. He seemed to be working around the clock. (S. 211–212.)

In the literature, however, there are references - and even with links to archives - about some penal aviation formations. Thus, the biographer of the Hero of the Soviet Union, I. E. Fedorov, calls the latter the "commander of a group of penalists" of the 3rd Air Army of the Kalinin Front. Allegedly, a group of penitentiaries numbering more than 50 people, acting under the leadership of Fedorov, shot down and knocked out about 500 (!) enemy aircraft in just three months[76] . Some of the publicists

immediately seized on such a "discovery". However, the details of the publication - in particular, the demands that allegedly came, according to the memoirs of the front-line soldier himself, from the front commander, Colonel-General I. S. Konev, "to shoot others

Russian "Ivans"", that is, subordinates of Fedorov, give rise to great doubt about the reliability of the story told. Firstly, the demand is clearly absurd: why shoot, and why did the combat pilot Fedorov have to do it, single-handedly administering the trial and reprisal and replacing the military tribunal? Secondly, the probability of the said conversation between the general and the major is practically zero: I. S. Konev from August 1942, that is, in the days of the events described, commanded not the Kalinin, but the Western Front. By the way, the number of combat victories of the "penalty boxers" is somehow incredible: a few paragraphs below, the author himself cites statistics, according to which not fifty pilots, but the whole 273rd air division (since April 1943 it was commanded by I.E. Fedorov) in the period of not three, but nine months - from April to December - shot down 509 enemy aircraft, and during this period there were intense battles over the Kursk salient. So either the front-line soldier's memory let him down, or the author who interviewed him did not understand something and

distorted.

Nevertheless, the press continues to attempt, without proper reason, to pass off the veteran as the commander of not a group of penalists, but an entire penal aviation regiment. The newspaper "Trud" twice spoke on this topic. Two Heroes of the Soviet Union responded to the first publication with reasoned objections: retired Lieutenant General S. A. Mikoyan and Honored Test Pilot of the USSR A. A. Shcherbakov. But the journalists did not consider it necessary to listen to the authors of the response.

Veterans wrote: "Our whole life, up to the present day, is connected with aviation. But they never heard from anyone about the fighter aviation regiment of the penalized, which he (I.E. Fedorov. - Yu.R.) allegedly commanded. Meanwhile, the air regiment is not a needle. Where are the witnesses of these exploits? Where are the battle reports? Including

the fantastic successes of forty pilots of this regiment, who allegedly destroyed 519 fascist aircraft in just two months of fighting. In fact, the best Soviet fighter regiments, namely the 5th, 9th, 32nd and 176th Guards, achieved such achievements in 3-4 years of hardest battles and at the cost of huge losses.

Now about whether there were any pilots in the Soviet Air Force penalized. I had to see a copy of the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of August 4, 1942 on the creation of such units. True, not regiments, but squadrons. However, no other documentary evidence of the appearance of penal pilots at the front has been made public. Veterans known to us have not heard of him either. Most likely, this order was signed in haste and was not implemented. Probably, Stalin was

simply explained that in which case it was simply impossible to prevent a pilot who had made a mistake and, logically, was doomed to almost certain death, from flying to the enemy. Does this mean that the pilots did not get into the penalty boxes? Of course they did. But then they were given a rifle in their hands and, together with the infantry, were sent on the attack as part of ordinary penal battalions. I also heard about this: according to the verdict of the tribunal, those named criminals were transferred to gunners-radio operators on Il-2 attack aircraft. Unlike the cockpit, on these machines the cockpit of the gunner, who protected the rear hemisphere with one machine gun, did not have reliable armor. Therefore, the losses among this category were especially great ... "[77] .

Reasonable reasoning veterans. But the arguments of the journalist - the author of the article, frankly, look shaky. He mainly refers to the ability of the authorities to "secret history". But the penal regiment is, in fact, not a needle; you cannot hide it in a haystack. But for some reason, no one knows about the existence of such parts (or at least one part), except for I. E. Fedorov himself. Colonel of Justice A.V. Moroz, who specifically studied the

issue of TsAMO funds, revealed the existence of penal units in aviation units, for example, in the 8th Air Army, which was part of the Stalingrad Front. He makes, in our opinion, the necessary reservation:

“But if the penal battalions as part of the fronts and the penal companies as part of the combined arms armies were created in accordance with the order of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR No. 227 of July 28, 1942, then the penal squadrons as part of the air armies

were formed at the same time, rather on the initiative of the
aviators, against orders from above" [\[78\]](#).

At the same time, it was only about squadrons, and in no case about
air regiments.

There are big gaps in the coverage of the question, where were the
guilty sailors "corrected"? We do not have exhaustive information on this
subject, but it is quite obvious that there were no "penalty" ships (vessels)
in the Navy. At least until the end of 1944, naval commanders and the Red
Navy, as well as their "brothers" from other branches of the military, were
sent to the land penal units of the Army in the field.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

Vinogradov, Lieutenant Commander of the Northern Fleet,
was my supernumerary "chief of staff" (in other words, platoon
clerk). He was fluent in German, but, oddly enough, it was this
knowledge of the enemy's language that brought him to us in SB.
Being the head of some division of the naval workshop for the
repair of ship radio stations, while checking the repaired radio for
reception on different bands, he came across Goebbels' speech.
And out of the simplicity of his soul, he began to translate it into
Russian in the presence of his subordinates. Someone reported
this either to a special department, or to the prosecutor's office,
and as a result, Vinogradov received two months in a penal
battalion "for complicity in enemy propaganda" ...

And I took him to me in this capacity because he had an
almost calligraphic handwriting, moreover, he could fit as a
translator, although I myself knew German relatively well.

(S. 55.)

Elsewhere in his book, A.V. Pylytsyn recalls that during the period of the Vistula-Oder operation in his platoon, a whole squad was staffed by former naval officers. An expressive detail is given by the memoirist: during the battle, the commander could see a vest from under the unbuttoned tunic.

With the publication on December 28, 1944, by the People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral of the Fleet N. G. Kuznetsov, order No. 0935, the procedure for serving sentences by officers-sailors was clarified. As in the Red Army, in the Navy, officers who committed minor crimes and were convicted by military tribunals with the use of a suspension of the execution of the sentence until the end of hostilities without deprivation of military rank were not sent to penal units. They, including those who served until the moment of conviction in inactive fleets, were appointed to officer positions in combat units of active fleets with a demotion. Officers who had previously served in the Pacific Fleet and the Red Banner Amur Flotilla were sent to fight in the Northern Fleet, who served as part of the Caspian Flotilla - in the Danube Flotilla. Officers convicted by

military tribunals with deprivation of military rank, as well as those to whom the court left the military rank, but who were convicted of serious crimes (murder, squandering military property, malicious hooliganism, etc.) were sent to penal units. The People's Commissar of the

Navy pointed out to the military councils of the operating fleets and flotillas the need to degrade officers to the rank and file and send them to the penal unit (if these officers were not tried by a military tribunal) "only for cowardice and instability" (in fact, in the spirit and letter of order No. 227) . That is, Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov did not allow any broad interpretation of this clause of the Stalinist order. By this time, the Navy also had its penal units, where the sailors

were sent. Officers of the Red Banner Baltic, Northern, Pacific Fleets and the Red Banner Amur Flotilla, deprived of their military rank by military tribunals, as well as those convicted of serious crimes, even if with the preservation of their rank, were to be sent to the penal units of the Red Banner Dnieper Flotilla (Pinsk), sentenced to Black Sea

fleet and the Caspian flotilla - to the penal units of the Danube flotilla (Izmail). Such penal

formations, although subordinate to flotillas, were nonetheless riflemen in nature and operated on land. This is confirmed by the recollections of retired Major General of Justice P. D. Baraboli, who commanded a machine-gun platoon in the 610th OSHR of the Volga military flotilla. There are numerous references to them in this book. Officers convicted in inactive fleets, flotillas without

deprivation of their officer rank and not subject to being sent to penal units arrived at their new duty station on their own, in a single order, having copies of the sentences in their hands. Those who were demoted were sent to penal units on the same grounds as convicted privates

and senior officers as part of teams. Officers convicted without deprivation of rank, but for serious crimes, were concentrated in the naval crew and sent at least twice a month to one or another active fleet, flotilla. Upon arrival at the place, the team of convicts was placed at the disposal of the personnel department of the officers of the fleet, flotilla and was escorted to penal units[79] . As a misunderstanding, one should perceive the allegations that some kind of penal formations were operating specifically for female military personnel.

—

E. L. Golbraikh:

Women were not sent to penal companies. To serve their sentences, they were sent to the rear ... There are no medical workers in the penal companies. Upon receipt of the assignment, a nurse is sent from the medical

battalion or a neighboring regiment. In one of the battles, the nurse was wounded. Hearing a woman's cry on the left flank, I hurried there. She was wounded in the arm, apparently not seriously, she was already bandaged. But shock, blood, pain... Then - this is the front line, the battle is still going on, what good, they can add. Through her tears, she delivered a monologue th

is given only partially: "How to love" (she used a different verb), so go with the whole regiment! And how to bandage, so there is no one! I'll be cured, I won't give it to anyone!" Did she keep her threat, left unknown.

However, due to the fact that there were gaps in the normative documents for a long time (until 1944, in particular, it was not stipulated how to deal with female servicemen who committed a misconduct or crime), they were transferred to the category of fines without prior notice. Here is an extract from the order for the 8th separate penal battalion:

"During the period of offensive battles in the area of the village of Sokovninka (Kursk region - Yu. R.), a former fighter of variable composition (highlighted by us. - Yu. R.) Lukyanchikova Pelageya Ivanovna, acting as an orderly of a rifle company, self-sacrificingly despising death, assisted the wounded directly on the battlefield. During the fighting from July 15 to July 24, she carried out 47 wounded soldiers with their weapons"[80] .

Similar cases are confirmed by documents. As a general rule, approx. 2 to Art. 28 of the Criminal Code, that is, the suspension of the execution of the sentence, with the direction to the penal units, was not applied to female military personnel. But in the practice of military tribunals there are cases when women were among the fined. The fact is that only more than a year after the order of the People's Commissar No. 227, namely on October 5, 1943, a directive was issued by the head of the Office of Military Tribunals, which contained a direct instruction not to send them to penal units. The directive also stated that female military personnel convicted using approx. 2 to Art. 28 of the Criminal Code, must be sent to the active army in ordinary military units. NPO Order No. 0413 did not apply to them.

In the meantime, there was no such directive, the military tribunals acted in accordance with the general procedure. So, the VT of the 164th Infantry Division was convicted with the direction of a soldier Kondratiev to a penal company. Acting as part of the OSHR, attached to the 379th Infantry Division, she distinguished herself in battle on March 13, 1943,

after which she was not only released from punishment, but also among the eight penalized company for courage and heroism was presented to the state award[81] . —

Order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. 0244 of August 6, 1944 (from October 25, 1944 it applied to convicts both in internal military districts and in the army) expressly forbade sending women to penal units. Female officers convicted with deferred sentences until the end of military actions, expiated the guilt in the army in the field[82] . Those of them who were convicted without deprivation of military rank should, like men, be appointed to officer positions in the combat units of the army with a demotion by one step. Those deprived of military rank were used in positions filled by privates. Well, those who did not receive a reprieve of the execution of the sentence by the court were awaiting a conclusion.

The procedure for sending certain categories of military personnel to penal units was, in fact, specified throughout the war. Archival documents testify to this.

Chapter

4 We drank ours back in civilian life

The formation of penal units was carried out in accordance with the states approved on September 28, 1942 by the First Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, General of the Army G.K. Zhukov. But even before that, the task was not solved arbitrarily - as God would put it on the soul, but according to temporary states.

In 1943, with the completion of the transition to permanent staff and the abolition of the institution of military commissars, that is, the approval of complete unity of command, the organizational and staff structure of the penal battalion looked like this: management, headquarters, three and four companies. The management of the OShB included: the battalion commander, his two deputies - for combat and political affairs, the quartermaster, and the clerk. The battalion headquarters consisted of the chief of staff, his deputy, the assistant chief of staff, the head of the medical unit, the head of communications, and two clerks.

A. V. Pylytsyn:

The structure of the battalion actually corresponded to a rifle regiment. The battalion commander (staff category colonel) had two general deputies, the chief of staff and the political officer (lieutenant colonels), as well as a supply assistant; the chief of staff has four assistants (PNSH-1, 2, 3.4) - majors. Each company had 200 or more fighters,

and these companies corresponded in composition to an ordinary rifle battalion. Thus, in terms of strength, the penal battalion approached the rifle regiment. The regular position of a company commander is a major, and a platoon commander is a captain.

(S. 26.)

How the process of formation of penal battalions went, let's look at the example of the 8th OShB of the Stalingrad (Don, Central, Belorussian, 1st Belorussian) Front, which went through a long and difficult combat path - from Stalingrad to Berlin. It was in its composition that Alexander Vasilievich Pyltsyn fought, the author of the book "Penalty Kick, or How an Officer Penal Battalion Reached Berlin." Its history began immediately after the announcement of order No.

227. On the Stalingrad front, they began to form two penal battalions according to temporary states: the 1st and 2nd (the numbers were temporary, for intra-front use). By the end of September 1942, however, it became clear that the front would not be able to complete two battalions, therefore, by order of the troops of the now Don Front, the 2nd OSHB was disbanded, and its command and political staff - 33 people - was sent to resupply the 1st go.

On November 25 of the same 1942, when numbers were assigned to penal battalions of all fronts by order of the Main Directorate for the Formation and Staffing of the NKO Troops of the USSR, the 1st OShB of the Don Front received number 8 and already fought under it until the very victory. Its structure consisted of: a battalion headquarters, three rifle [companies](#)^[83] and a company of anti-tank rifles, a supply platoon and a commandant platoon (provided later by the state).

Guards Major Ya. F. Grigoriev was appointed commander of the 8th Special Operations Brigade, battalion commissar P. P. Lavrenyuk was appointed military commissar, and Captain G. I. Loban was appointed chief of staff. In addition to them, the permanent composition of the battalion included: deputy battalion commander for combat, staff officers, officers of the political apparatus, company commanders and political officers, platoon commanders, several (headquarters mess, clothing, food supply, financial allowance), military doctor and military paramedic. In addition to officers, six sergeants and Red Army soldiers served in the companies on a permanent basis - a clerk-captain, a medical instructor, and four porters. Both the supply platoon and the commandant platoon, introduced into the state later, consisted of non-penalized soldiers. As of August 15, 1942, there were 95 permanent servicemen in the battalion (of which 29 were in excess of staff until further notice). Attached to the battalion

detective of the special department of the NKVD of the front, lieutenant of state security P. T. Efimov.

The commander of the guard battalion, Major Ya. F. Grigoriev, and the headquarters, with the permission of the Military Council of the Front, selected the commanders of companies and platoons in the Separate Regiment of the Reserve Officers of the Front. If someone did not justify the hopes, they parted with him without regret. "For an attempt to evade a business trip to the front line," one of the orders of the commander of the OSHB said, "I remove the commander of the rifle company, Captain Yukhta Ivan Danilovich, from his post, send him to the personnel department of the front and petition the military council to reduce him in rank to lieutenant ". Several platoon commanders were also —

seconded[84] . Along the way, despite the incomplete staffing of the permanent staff, the battalion stationed in the village of Samofalovka (now the Dubovsky district of the Volgograd region) began to receive change fighters.

V. V. Karpov:

... Appointment to a penal company or penal battalion was considered successful for an officer, because there the military rank was assigned one step higher. So, shown in the film ("Penal Battalion." - Yu. R.), the completely illiterate militarily major general, for some reason, complains that he does not have enough personnel for command positions in the penal battalion. In addition, the penal battalion could not obey this general, because this is the formation of a front. The shown major general, even if he was the commander of a division or corps (not clear from the film), a penal battalion could only be attached.

Separate penal companies were also formed according to their states. The organizational structure of the OSHR looked as follows: commander, administration (two deputy commanders - for combat and for

political unit, clerk, medical officer, foreman), three platoons. In practice, minor deviations from the states could be tolerated.

E. L. Golbraikh:

The commanders of the penal companies do not complete their units, whoever they send you, you will fight with those. Another important detail. It was not customary to ask the finers what they were convicted for. And which of the fighters was a former criminal-recidivist nicknamed Vaska Zhigan, and who was a former order-bearer-machine gunner, only our staff officer-clerk knew for sure. He was in charge of the personal files of the contingent of the penal company.

Penal units were built by analogy with ordinary rifle units and subunits. The only thing that markedly distinguished them was the number of Variables in the platoon. There could be 35–40 or 60 of them. Accordingly, there could be up to 190–200 servicemen in a company. In this regard, the platoons were provided with a full-time position of a platoon political instructor.

P. D. Barabolya:

Then the appointments began to be announced. Company loomed quite impressive in terms of the number of personnel unit: it consisted of five platoons, each with 60-70 people. The company commander, senior lieutenant Pyotr Matveev, was given the rights of a battalion commander. In the state of platoons, given their large number and the special category of privates, there were deputy commanders

on the political side.

(S. 356.)

S. L. Aria:

I ended up in a penal company, where there were about 150 of us. We were armed only with rifles. We had no machine guns or machine guns. All officers were combatant, not penalized, and privates and junior officers were penalized.

Part of the command positions in the penal units were replaced by variable ones. You have to understand how highly qualified they were in penal battalions.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

According to the staffing table, we had two deputy platoon commanders each. They were appointed by order for a battalion from among the penalized, which the company commander and I proposed.

One of my deputies was an experienced commander of a rifle regiment, who had more than two years of combat experience, but somewhere made a mistake in battle, former Lieutenant Colonel Sergey Ivanovich Petrov ... I don't remember his name), he was also responsible for supplying the platoon with ammunition, food and, in general, everything that was necessary for military operations. And he acted smartly, proactively, with knowledge of the intricacies of this Cause. To be honest, I was flattered that I, still an inexperienced 20-year-old lieutenant, only a platoon commander, had

military lieutenant colonels as deputies, although they were former ones. But the main thing was that I hoped to use the combat and everyday experience of these already middle-aged, by my then standards, people. I appointed a major artilleryman, a handsome, tall hero with a memorable, somewhat unusual surname Bubbles, as one squad leader. Another squad was commanded by the captain-border guard Omelchenko,

thin, with delicate features, a quick look and a constant, barely perceptible smile, the third was Captain Lugovoi, a tanker with a grenadier mustache, quick on his feet ... The non-standard "chief of staff" (in other words, a platoon clerk) was Lieutenant Commander of the Northern Fleet Vinogradov .

(S. 54.)

Personal mention (especially given the "concept" of the film "Penal Battalion") requires the status of special officers. According to the directive of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR L.P. Beria dated July 18, 1941, special departments at all levels were tasked with "a merciless fight against spies, traitors, saboteurs, deserters and all kinds of alarmists and disorganizers", to ensure the cleansing of them from parts Red Army. The same tasks essentially remained unchanged after April 14, 1943 - the date of the transformation of the Directorate of Special Departments of the NKVD of the USSR into the Main Directorate of Counterintelligence "Smersh" of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the corresponding reorganization of grassroots —

structures[85] . These tasks were carried out by special officers. Each penal unit was assigned to the detectives of a special department, later the Smersh counterintelligence department of the front (penal battalion) or the army (penalty). They were not included in the states of penal formation

E. L. Golbraikh:

The company was supervised by the army department "Smersh". But I don't remember them getting in the way or visiting us often. They had a lot of things to do in the Baltic States ...

No need to "demonize" those who served in special departments. Recently, in any movie about the war, except for "In August forty-four", special officers are shown as sort of sadists, wandering around with a revolver in the rear and looking for whatever soldier

shoot the back of the head. You just need to understand that some of the army security officers and counterintelligence officers fought with their people and are criminal, but most did their duty in accordance with the guidelines of that difficult time ... For

those who are convinced of the permissiveness and lack of control of employees of special departments, we believe it will be useful to learn about the order I. V. Stalin No. 0089 dated May 31, 1943, even if he has no direct relation to the penalty box. The reason for issuing the order was "perversions and criminal errors" in the investigative work of the OO of the 7th separate army, which most likely meant fabrication of cases. So, for the indicated crimes, the deputy head of the OO, the head of the investigative unit, Lieutenant Colonel Kerzon and senior investigator Ilyainen, were dismissed from the counterintelligence agencies and sentenced to 5 years in a camp, and investigators Sedogin, Izotov and Solovyov, also expelled from the agencies, were sent to a penal battalion under the head of the rear of the Red Army. The head of the NGO of the army Dobrovolsky (the military rank is not indicated in the order) was also punished - for the lack of control over the work of the investigative unit and the military prosecutor of the army, Colonel of Justice Gerasimov - for self-removal from the prosecutor's supervision of the investigation in the NGO, they received a reprimand with a warning from the people's commissar of defense [86] . So, as we see, the special officers were asked by the command, there was also prosecutorial supervision, for the reduction of v

Another thing is that in practice it did not always work out as it should according to the law and according to conscience. But such phenomena took place not only in the time of the war and not only in the Stalinist state, they are enough in our time. Let's listen to the opinion of a professional military lawyer.

P. D. Barabolya:

As it often happened before, and it often happens now, we first issue circulars, and then the material basis for filling is selected. Something similar happened with the formation of penal units.

The most significant omission, in my opinion, was the lack of a status, a legal provision that determines the special (by its unusualness) place of penal units. Here, other zealous commanders could humiliate the human dignity of the "penalty box" with impunity, throw people to certain death, not always caused by the interests of achieving military success: "Penalty boxes! .."

(S. 355–356.)

Disciplinary practice

Since the penal formations were, in essence, ordinary rifle units, all combat activities and the organization of service in them were regulated by general military regulations. There is nothing that would make them related to correctional institutions. They were "corrected" here by one thing - indispensable participation in hostilities.

M. I. Suknev:

In a large pit, a meeting was held with the new arrivals. The word to the battalion commander, that is, to me. This is where, perhaps, the knowledge of adventure and crime literature of all times and gleaned from peoples came in handy. The main thing is the approach to the soul, especially this applies to dangerous criminals, in this case, the smartest in all respects Odessans and Rostovites ... So, I declare: from now on, the one who is here in the battalion is not a criminal, not a thief, but a warrior

Soviet Motherland, its defender. And so that I don't hear the word "penalty box" - we are all equal here, and if you have to die in battle for the Motherland, then on equal terms! .. You are an ordinary selective unit. Now let's be different. What task was received - into the fire and into

water. My word is the law, according to the charter. Here they all perked up.

(S. 152.)

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

It fell to my lot to command a platoon in a separate penal company for more than a year. And, of course, I know quite well the essence of this division. It must be said that it almost did not differ from the usual one: the same discipline, the same order, the same relations between penal soldiers and officers. It may seem strange to some, but they addressed me and other commanders in the official way: "Comrade Lieutenant", and not in the camp way: "Citizen Chief", I have never heard such a thing. We supplied weapons and food, as it should be... We did not apply any special disciplinary or other sanctions to the penalized, except for the statutory ones. I often even forgot that I was in command of an unusual unit.

E. L. Golbraikh:

None of the penalty boxers has ever addressed the authorities with the word "citizen", only - "comrade". And they didn't poke the soldiers: "penalty box", everyone was "comrades". Do not forget that the Disciplinary Regulations of the Red Army applied to penal units ...

In the film "Gu-Ga" there is an episode where the foreman beats, that is, "teaches", a penal, and even at the direction of the company commander. It is absolutely unbelievable that this could actually happen. Every officer and sergeant knows that in battle they can be ahead of the offended ... Penalties are not God's lambs, and they do not have wooden rifles in their hands. Another thing is that the company commander had

the right to add a term of stay in the company, and for committing a serious crime - to shoot. And such a case in our company was. The deserter was caught by the penalty boxers themselves, shot in front of the ranks and buried across the road so that the very memory of him would be erased. Now it's not easy to talk about it, but then there was a different time and a different attitude to this ...

I. N. Tretyakov:

How were the personnel treated? The way it is supposed to treat a subordinate, a person living nearby. Commander-in-Chief General Pukhov told me about this even when I was appointed ... Service and life were organized in accordance with the charters, political and educational work was carried out, as usual in army conditions. Reproaches to the fighters from the side of the commanders that they, they say, were convicted and were in the penalty area, were not allowed. They addressed in the authorized way: "Comrade fighter (soldier)". The food was the same as in the usual parts. For

failure to comply with an order, self-mutilation, escape from the battlefield or an attempt to go over to the enemy, the command and political staff of the penal unit had the right and was obliged to apply all measures of influence, up to execution

in place.

A. L. Pyltsyn:

By the way, I heard many times that in some similar battalions, when addressing them (persons of variable composition. - Yu. R.), and even in documents, the word "penalty" was added to their former military rank (for example, "penalty major"), or in general everyone was called "penalty privates", etc. I don't know whose decision it was.

But in our penal battalion, apparently, in order not to once again emphasize their position, which would hardly contribute to their re-education, it was customary to call all of them belonging to the variable composition of the battalion "fighters of change." And they addressed their commanders, as usual accepted in the army, for example: "comrade captain."

(S. 25.)

Considering the contingent of penal companies, the following question will not seem superfluous: were the commanders afraid of being shot in the back in battle? In this way, another scoundrel could try to settle accounts with them, to avenge their exactingness.

E. L. Golbraikh:

This happened infrequently. In order to avoid such excesses, they tried to treat the penalized as ordinary soldiers, spoke with respect to everyone, but no one flirted with them and did not "eat" moonshine. They, the penalists, have nothing to lose, there is a principle: "you die today, I will die tomorrow." But there were cases ... I heard about them ... And the platoon could lose in cards. What to do - the audience is like that ... If the company commander behaved like the last bastard, or shot those he didn't like with his unlimited power, then he had a lot of chances to get a bullet in the next battle from his "wards". But, for example, if the "informal leader", as they said, "godfather", from the criminal fraternity, began to overly brazenly pump the rights, they say, to everyone for a liter of alcohol, otherwise we won't go on the attack, the conversation with him was short.

M. I. Suknev:

You watch a 1989 film by the Odessa film studio "Gu-Ga" about fines, and there is not enough evil against the screenwriters - a complete lie, fiction! I even wrote a letter to the film studio. But who is listening to us front-line soldiers? A picture from the movie... Nobody wants to sing drill. The battalion commander puts the system several times on the dusty road: "Get up! Get down! Get up! Lie down! What nonsense. Indeed, in the very first battle, such a commander is waiting for a bullet or a knife in the back.

(S. 153–154.)

M. G. Klyuchko:

How did we build our relations with these people?.. Only in a comradely way. There simply could not be any other relationship under those conditions. To show with my attitude that I was superior to them meant not to return alive after the first battle.

We had such a case. A young officer has arrived. In a new form, with gold epaulettes, which were then only introduced. Lined up a company. And he said something for a long time, pacing along the line. And they didn't like dandies on the front line. And someone from the formation shouted out, they say, finish it, I would feed better. He blew up in an instant. Who? I'll shoot! Come out! The answer is mat. And criminals are a united people. The ranks closed. He pulls out a gun and shoots at the voice. The bullet went through the side of one, hit the leg of the second, ricocheted into the finger of the third. All three were taken to the infirmary... But this officer did not return after the first battle. And no one was particularly interested in what happened to him. When I asked my people, they only looked away.

There could be no other relations than respectful ones at the Front. After all, by and large, everyone depended on each other. There was a strict law: in battle, you must support a comrade with fire when he makes a dash. If you don't do this, you won't have a life.

Maybe that's why I lived so long that I did not try to flaunt either my position or my knowledge. On the contrary, he learned a lot from his soldiers. After all, among the same prisoners came across people worthy of respect. I did not try to put pressure on them, proving my case. If I believed that it was necessary to do this and not otherwise, then I tried to convince them of the correctness of my decision. If they did not agree - well, I did not grab the holster ... But

if someone could not get off the ground under enemy fire, then he was forced to do it by his own.

Again, given the contingent, at the expense of which the penal companies were often recruited, it is legitimate to raise the question, did the Variables allow cases of violence or robberies of the civilian population? Front-line soldiers do not hide: there were such cases, but they were not of a mass nature (this will be discussed further below).

To reduce the possibility of contacts with the civilian population to a minimum, penal companies have never been located in settlements. And outside the combat situation, they remained in the field, located in trenches and dugouts.

combat training

For the information of those publicists who consider the penalists nothing more than cannon fodder, easily and indiscriminately sacrificed to the moloch of war: the penal units not only fought, their daily routine also included combat training. Since, using attached penal formations, commanders of divisions, brigades, regiments solved specific combat missions (the issue of redemption by personnel usually worried them the least), they, naturally, were interested in the success of the case. And who could provide it: a fighter, poorly trained or honed the skills of combat work to automaticity?

First of all, this applies to penal battalions, which for the most part consisted of military professionals, although they had different military specialties. Because of this, after appropriate additional training, they were able to solve tasks of increased complexity, to perform the functions of shock units.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

... Upon arrival in Gorodets, for a long time we were engaged in receiving reinforcements, forming, arming and knocking together units. Combat training was established, the main goal was to train former pilots, quartermasters, gunners and other specialists to fight as infantry, which means to make strenuous marches, crawl, dig in, overcome trenches and ditches, and also to fire accurately from machine guns, machine guns, anti-tank rifles and even from captured "faustpatrons". But perhaps the most difficult, especially in psychological terms, was to overcome the fear of some trainees before throwing combat grenades, especially F-1 grenades. The lethal force of its fragments remained up to 200 meters, and even a trained person could throw this hand-held projectile only 50-60 meters away. The training took place on combat (not training!) Grenades that explode for real! True, they had to be thrown from the trench. But not everyone was able to overcome the fear and not immediately.

(S. 50–51.)

As the memories of the commanders of other penal units show, the picture described by A.V. Pyltsyn was not something unique.

M. I. Suknev:

The preparation of the battalion to go on the defensive or on the offensive began, and perhaps, for the worse, reconnaissance in battle for the damned "tongues", which our troops got too expensive!

Everything went as it should. Only the company of Shaturny, the so-called "belmey", speak Russian, shoot from

German captured rifles refused. You should have seen: there is a drill. Shaturny steps on the foot of a Basmach (as the memoirist calls the natives of Central Asia. - Yu. R.) and commands: "Left, left," and he keeps trying to raise his right. Shaturny steps on the toe of the boots and continues to "teach". A cunning people ... I choose several tall and quick-witted Basmachi, literate, as it is written in their personal affairs. Translator - Shaturny. We prove to them that they, the Basmachi, are the best shooters and cavalry riders, and "there is nothing to fool around ..." Almost all to no avail! They don't fit.

(S. 152–153.)

P. D. Barabolya:

... The attitude of people to the service began to change somehow imperceptibly. The number of violations of discipline decreased, [former] sailors began to treat their classes more diligently. And that was our first priority. And for good reason. For other machine guns, PTRs were unfamiliar. I had to explain the basics and wisdom of owning weapons, to teach everything that is indispensable in battle. It should be noted that it was not necessary to particularly convince subordinates of common army truths. It is understandable. Who would like to become a target on the battlefield! The sailors and foremen, moreover, were well aware that they, the penalty box, would certainly be thrown into the most dangerous areas, where only their own combat skills could become a guarantee of survival. Be that as it may, in the two weeks that we were allowed to form and some additional training of personnel, I learned a lot about my new subordinates and was finally convinced: no, not lost

they are people.

(S. 358.)

The military financier N. P. Shelepugin, who in 1943 served as the head of office-treasurer of the OSHR, also confirms: if the situation allowed, people were trained in penal companies. This took about a week. Peremennikov were taught to shoot, throw grenades, go on the attack, dig in. The commanders of the departments were given machine guns, the rest were given rifles. N. P. Shelepugin recalled that it was not without curiosities: they give a fighter (former prisoner) a grenade, and he asks for a Finn [87]

— .

Let us refer to one more testimony of the commander of the penal battalion, especially since he cannot be denied the ability to artistically convey the features of everyday life and the life of his subordinates, and this is quite rare in memoir literature.

M. I. Suknev:

... But now the time for military training has passed. Call from division commander Olkhovsky himself.

- Suknev, General Artyushenko will be with me tomorrow at noon! Look. And look what's wrong, he hits in the ear! —

the Colonel laughs.

"Let's get along in character," I answered Olkhovsky. But Artyushenko really could. When I gave one colonel! Well, I think I won't let that happen, I'm a combatant, a guardsman. Before that, a friend of mine, the assistant chief of staff from the Volkov division, brought brand new major's epaulets straight into the forest, which we washed with him.

The next day. Noon. The battalion is lined up along a forest road, which we have trampled down. Officers ahead. Behind her - "bear cubs", as I said, the most competent techies of all trades, almost the intelligentsia. The last - machine gunners, also from officers. And closing - a company of Basmachi. From the forest clearing in front of the formation appeared a

koshevka, which was carried by a combatant crow, in white stockings, a trotter. The chiefs came out of the kosheva - our divisional commander and general.

We stopped in front of the formation. I give the command: "Battalion, calmly! Alignment to the middle! - and I mint a step with a hand at my temple, from the ranks straight to General Artyushenko, tall, like Marshal Timoshenko, only young, not so long ago promoted from colonel in the Tikhvin battles. He reported strictly, loudly, exactly according to the charter, not a hitch, not a speck of dust. I see Artyushenko liked it. "Thank God it passed!" - I thought...

Artyushenko walks along the line, I follow. And one basmach fell asleep at the fire at night, burned half the floor. I put him in the fourth row, and he suddenly got out in the first. I scold him: "What the hell pulled you out! Three steps back! To get away from the front row! Artyushenko laughed, then said: "Well, okay. Let's march through." I command my

eagles, company commanders: "Step march!" And that's all - chop with your foot! - went. Well, there is snow, they go in felt boots, there is nothing to chop with. The first - Russian officers, went very well. Odessans followed them - nothing passed. Then these Basmachi. Everyone is so clumsy and undersized. Maybe they are good bandits, but no warriors, they are shown in the movies as heroes. But they tried too. In the interval between the companies, about five people jump forward and dance some kind of their own national "overture", shouting: "La-la-la." Artyushenko how slammed, how much [was] the spirit laughed. He waved his hand: "Let's go!" In the ear I

did not receive from the complacent, as it seemed to me, front-line soldier, commander of our 14th corps ...

(S. 154–156.)

Logistics

Answering the question whether the penal battalions, as shown in the film "Shtrafbat", were worn out, constantly hungry and fought with German weapons, one cannot do without a story about how the penal units were provided with weapons, ammunition, clothing

property, food, how their medical, financial, household and other needs were met. The personnel of the penal

units, along with other units of the Red Army, fought with standard weapons of domestic production - TT pistols (F. V. Tokarev), revolvers of the Nagant system, submachine guns of V. A. Degtyarev (PPD) and G. S. Shpagin (PPSh), rifles of the Mosin system of the 1891/1930 model, Tokarev self-loading rifles (SVT), hand grenades (F-1, RPG-40, RPG-41) and others.

P. D. Barabolya:

One by one, my colleagues were appointed to positions. Finally, it was my turn. — Lieutenant Barabol!

You will command
machine gun platoon.
- Eat!

Immediately figured out: what kind of machine guns could they be? Surely the Maxim heavy machine gun, which has long declared itself in battles, and possibly the Degtyarev hand-held machine gun, is also a reliable machine. As it turned out later, I was not mistaken. The platoon was given three "machine guns", one hand and six anti-tank rifles. Pretty good equipment!

(S. 356.)

N. I. Smirnov:

We were given machine guns and spared no ammunition. They said: "Take as much as you can take." In addition, ^{relied} defensive grenades "F-1" and offensive "RGD-3" for each. They armed themselves in battle. The Germans then appeared faustpatrons. I taught my subordinates to shoot with them, but they were afraid of getting burned. I had to myself.

Although the authors of other publications "introduce" units of various types of troops into the headquarters of the penal units, in fact they were only rifle units armed with only light small arms.

Life, of course, made its own adjustments. In order to increase the firepower and combat capabilities of the entrusted units and subunits, many commanders, on their own initiative, formed non-standard machine-gun, mortar and anti-tank crews, arming them with machine guns - light (DP - V. A. Degtyareva) and easel (Maxim system, model 1910 / 41 of the Goryunov system - SG-43), company mortars of 50 mm caliber, anti-tank rifles of V. A. Degtyarev (PTRD) and S. G. Simonov (PTRS). From April to November 1943, the 8th Special Guards Brigade of the Central Front even had a T-60 light tank in service, which penalized tankers found knocked out and brought back to life. The battalion command used the tank for reconnaissance.

Due to the lack of Soviet-made weapons, especially in the first half of the war, the penalists armed themselves with captured samples: MP-40 submachine guns, MG-34 and MG-40 machine guns, and even German company mortars.

It was not difficult for those who were on the front line to get hold of a German pistol or machine gun. There was also a special chic in this, by the way, well known to all front-line soldiers, and not just to the penalty box.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

Of course, we could not carry the equipment that the Fritz threw with us, we took only machine guns ("Schmeissers"), and light machine guns, and of course, pistols, mostly Walthers and Parabellums.

(S. 39.)

E. L. Golbraikh:

Captured weapons were used everywhere and were very popular. We hand over the weapons of those who were out of action to the foreman, and he looks into his "ledger" and asks: "What are you fighting there for? According to the statement, all the weapons of the company have long been handed over! And without a captured pistol at the end of the war, it is difficult to imagine any infantry commander. It was a craze.

To perform specific combat missions, artillery, mortar and even tank units could be temporarily transferred to the operational subordination of the commanders of penal formations. The penal units were provided with uniforms by rear

services, like the entire army. Servicemen convicted with a suspended sentence arrived at the penal unit in their uniforms, but with worn insignia and no awards. On the spot, the former officers exchanged their former uniforms for the uniform of the rank and file. Those who arrived from places of detention as a result of early release were issued uniforms for privates, most often of the 2nd or 3rd category. Outwardly, the penalty box was no different from the excellent composition of ordinary rifle units. The insignia was worn in accordance with

military ranks, and did not have any special "identification marks" indicating belonging to a penal unit. The opinions sometimes expressed that the penalists did not wear an asterisk on caps and caps with earflaps - this, they say, was both a certain punishment and clothes,

distinctive element documented Not
are confirmed.

N. Tarasenko:

The process of "adaptation" in the battalion turned out to be extremely simple: the officer's overcoat was replaced with a second-hand soldier, instead of boots - boots with windings, instead of officer shoulder straps - soldier's. In the barracks there are bunk beds without bedding.

I. M. Bogatyrev, who fought in the OShB as a clerk-captain, recalled:

"My duty was to accept. Here he takes off everything: chrome boots, belt, team uniforms. He changes clothes and tells how he was convicted. It means that he gives me an officer's quarters and becomes a soldier until he atones for his guilt with blood. Either he dies and does not return, or after being wounded, he comes to us in order to receive his former uniform .

N. I. Smirnov:

They dressed the penalty box no worse than the rest. I have received refills four times. I remember once I went for a new batch of penalty boxes, so they were brought in wagons in their underwear. We immediately put them on, gave them weapons, set them according to their height, and "by eye" appointed

front-line soldiers, conscripts, and assistant platoon commanders. penalists According to the evidence, they used not only captured weapons, but also elements of uniforms, for example, replacing the windings with German boots. But again, this was not some kind of signature, or something, feature of the penalty box; in front-line life, this was also resorted to in ordinary linear units. Provision came at the expense of stocks seized from the enemy, although cases of looting cannot be ruled out[89] .

The penal units were provided with food by the rear bodies of the armies and fronts, in which they stayed, according to the norms established for the personnel of the advanced units of the army in the field. If there was any specificity here, then it had a peculiar character. This is how it looks from the words of a person who directly fought in a penal company.

E. A. Golbraikh:

An ordinary company receives allowances from a battalion, a battalion from a regiment, a regiment from divisional warehouses, and a division from army warehouses. Karamzin also remarked: "If you want to express in one word what is being done on Rus, it should be said: they steal. There is no need to think that something has changed in more than two hundred years. In all instances, they will steal something. Completely nothing reaches the soldier. And here, oddly enough, there is no one to steal. And here comes into force the word - "army". Our foreman receives allowances directly from army warehouses. True, they "look into his hands" too. But we are not poor, we will bring some of the trophies. The foreman receives the products completely and of good quality, undiluted vodka. The officers will be brought long coats, and not cloth breeches, but chic blue wool riding breeches. And uniforms for the penalized will receive not the last term, but quite decent. In addition, we have unaccounted for horses, instead of twelve horses - a small herd. If necessary, we slaughter a younger horse, and what is your veal! Let's plow someone's garden. Yes, another important factor. In addition to the eternal Russian pity for the suffering prisoner, every rear quartermaster was always afraid of someday "roaring into the penalty area." Provided us honestly.

In order to finally dispel doubts that the penalized in the food supply did not experience

discrimination, we will give one more evidence of the same front-line soldier.

E. A. Golbraikh:

Did the fines get 100 grams of "People's Commissar's"? As well as all the personnel of the front-line units. In winter, as well as on the offensive, regardless of the season. I didn't drink much at the front. A bottle of vodka was shared with a matchbox placed end to end. Five boxes - the bottle is divided. Fighters often got moonshine. It happened that people unknowingly drink wood alcohol and die in terrible agony. A lot of people died in the war on a "drunken case."

Trophy food was also used whenever possible.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

... With food captured from the Germans, as far as possible, they replenished their meager dry rations, which were almost gone. We were especially surprised by the trophy bread, sealed in a transparent film with the marked year of manufacture: 1937-1938. How many years was stored, and you could even cut and eat frozen! Do not compare with our crackers. We were equally surprised by some kind of hybrid of ersatz honey with butter in large briquettes. Sandwiches from this bread with such honey butter were very welcome and turned out to be quite

hearty.

In food trophies there was also a lot of chocolate, which also well supported our completely weakened from physical and nervous strain.

strength.

(S. 39.)

At the same time, the last thing the author would like is to give the reader the illusion of food sufficiency at the front. Anything happened. And not so bad if objective circumstances intervened.

M. G. Klyuchko:

It is not true that the penalty box went on the attack under the influence of alcohol. Usually they went hungry. It happened that for two days there was not a crumb in the mouth. Water was boiled and drunk. After the bombing, at night they climbed along the front line in search of dead horses or other

animals.

Near Melitopol or Mariupol, I don't remember exactly, we spent half a day in one village. The hostess treated us to real Ukrainian borscht. So after that, I writhed for days from pain in my stomach. Maybe it was different in other departments. Don't know. But I'm talking about what happened to myself and those who served with me.

A. V. Pylytsyn:

Despite the fact that it was already the beginning of March, nature broke out with such a powerful "snowfall" (the snow did not fall, but fell for several days) that as soon as we arrived in the designated area, all the roads and access roads became simply impassable, and not just impassable. And for a whole week we were even cut off from our battalion rear. As our wits used to say, the weather then was "dietary". For almost a week, due to the fact that it was impossible to bring food, our daily three-time hot food ration consisted of snow melted in camp kitchens (that's what there was no shortage of!) And the "broth" prepared from it, which, in addition to boiling water, contained quite rarely

coming across fat and some inclusions from American pork stew (1 can per company!), We then called the "Second Front". Breadcrumbs were added to this. And there is no way to spice up this "dietary" dish with something.

(S. 48–49.)

It was much worse when the understandable difficulties in delivering hot food and dry rations to the front line were often aggravated by dishonesty, lack of initiative of the commissaries, and even by direct theft of food. The order of the People's Commissar of Defense given in Chapter 2 on the punishment of officials of the Kalinin Front, through whose fault the front line fighters were malnourished, receiving greatly reduced rations, or even died of hunger, speaks for itself [90]

Those events took place in the spring of 1943. And what can we say about the autumn of 1942, when the situation on the entire Soviet-German front was desperate, including material supplies.

"For six days they did not give any food. Only from vegetable gardens dug potatoes and ate them.

"I am in a very bad position. For three days now, I haven't eaten ... I'm lying in the trench hungry, I have a machine gun on my back, I don't have the strength to shoot, I want to eat and eat.

"In the rear and at the front, they feed once for three days and not enough. Here in the infirmary they feed twice a day. They give 600 grams of bread, a bad judgment is a little porridge"[91]

Such complaints were constantly recorded by special departments in oral conversations and correspondence of the military personnel of the Stalingrad Front. Based on reports from the field, on November 4, 1942, the Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR sent a message to the People's Commissariat of Defense citing specific facts when entire formations and units (15th Guards Rifle Division, 186th and 507th anti-tank destroyers, 1159th artillery and 140th mortar regiments) were not provided with food for several days due to tightening

with re-fixing from one food warehouse to another, slow processing of sales certificates and for other reasons. Attention was drawn to the fact that the personnel of the defeated units withdrawn from the battlefield, leaving the encirclement and other categories of military personnel are not provided with food for a long time and eat what they find on the collective farm fields or beg from the local population. A conclusion was made, based on concrete statements by military personnel, that the unsatisfactory supply of food units "causes negative sentiments among the soldiers"[92] .

The penitentiaries shared the hardships of the war on an equal footing with the entire army. Here, for example, is the order of the day established by order of the commander in the 8th Special Operations Command of the Stalingrad Front. Every day, 10 hours of classes were provided, requiring a large expenditure of physical strength. But from August 15 to November 27, 1942, hot food was prepared only for breakfast and lunch, dinner was not on the schedule. And what kind of food did the personnel receive? The military doctor of the 3rd rank Motherland informed on command: half of the flour is unsuitable for baking bread, there is no salt and potatoes, only pickles and tomatoes are available from vegetables. Even on the pre-holiday days of December 30 and 31, all breakfast and lunch dishes were prepared from wheat flour. Vitamin products have not been

received for allowance since the founding of the battalion. From the report of the military doctor it follows: up to a third of the soldiers and officers of the battalion remained sick in the ranks, fought, patiently enduring the symptoms of tularemia, stomach pain, bloating and high fever. It is impossible not to share the feelings of A. Moroz, who raised priceless documents of the 8th OSHB in the

“You read the report of the battalion doctor full of bitterness
and feel even more fully the greatness of the feat of our
compatriots at Stalingrad”[93] .

Yes, people survived everything. Their steadfastness was nourished by the consciousness of what they are fighting for, for the sake of which they are forced to

endure unimaginable difficulties. As the war progressed, the Supreme High Command tried by all means to improve the food supply for the troops[94] . For these purposes, of course, after the necessary verification, were used and

products captured as trophies[95] . The same source of replenishment of food stocks was resorted to directly on the front line, and the penalty box is no exception. As for the financial allowance,

then, like the entire officer corps of the Red Army, the permanent composition of the penal units was provided with a monetary allowance, based on their positions and military ranks, received field money.

Variables, who by order of the part were appointed to the positions of junior officers with the ranks of corporal, junior sergeant and sergeant, also received a monetary allowance for their position. The rest relied on the salary of an ordinary Red Army soldier in the amount of 8.5 rubles. per month. But field penalties were not paid.

The payment of money to the families of former commanders and political workers according to the monetary certificate was stopped, they received benefits as families of Red Army soldiers and junior commanders.

Political and educational work, morale

Political work, education of military personnel in the spirit of devotion to the CPSU (b), the Soviet state and Stalin personally were carried out in penal units, as well as in the Red Army as a whole, by the command and political staff in accordance with the instructions of the Central Committee of the party, orders of the People's Commissar of Defense and directives of the head of the GlavPU of the Red Army . We risk repeating to tire the reader, but here, too, the main army political agency did not provide for any specific bias in the calculation of fines. It is no coincidence that even NPO Order No. 227, to which the penal units owe their birth, was declared by the directive of the GlavPU of the Red Army of August 15, 1942, the main military-political document defining the combat tasks of the entire Red Army and the content of all party political work for the next period of the war[96] . In a word, there

were conversations of agitators, and political information, and loud reading of newspapers, and "military leaflets".

A. V. Pylytsyn:

It should be noted that in ... a relatively long defensive period of hostilities, both the supply and the work of the field mail, and all kinds of information were well established. Even the central newspapers Pravda, Zvezdochka (as they called Krasnaya Zvezda), Komsomolskaya Pravda and others were regularly delivered to us, albeit in small quantities, and letters even came from the distant rear (for example, from my mother and sisters from the Far East), although sometimes with a significant delay, but

always reliable.

(S. 68.)

P. D. Barabolya:

At the very end of December 42, our company was withdrawn to the second echelon - to replenish and put in order after heavy fighting. Soon an unusual message spread: guests came to us to congratulate us on the New Year, 1943. The "guests" were two girly schoolgirls aged 12–14. I still cannot imagine how they managed to get from Beketovka to the area that remained a war zone. To all of us, both the penalized and the commanders, they said some kind, unusual words, wished victory, long life and everything else that their glorious children's hearts prompted them. Then our charming guests presented us with New Year's gifts: sachets of self-garden and potato pies. This, apparently, was all that the front-line Beketovka could send children with. How many years have passed since that distant time, but every time the memory resurrects a touching unforgettable meeting, tears well

up in my eyes.

(S. 363.)

General political tasks from the point of view of the tasks of penal units were refracted by local political workers, but this was the case in any unit or subunit of any kind of troops. In the political educational work with the penitentiaries, of course, the not quite usual contingent and the need for the changelings to get rid of "sins" within a limited period of time - one to three months, as well as the increased complexity of the combat missions that were set before the penal formations were taken into account.

Party-political, educational work, although it was strict, was not at all oriented towards a repressive bias. Here it is appropriate to recall the order of I.V. Stalin No. 0391, issued on October 4, 1941, regarding the numerous facts of the substitution of educational work for repressions. The method of persuasion, as the main one in educational work, was stated in the order, replaced by swearing, repressions against subordinates and assault. Restoring "in rights" educational work with personnel, the people's commissar of defense ordered

"in the most resolute way, up to bringing the perpetrators to trial by a military tribunal, to fight all the phenomena of illegal repression, assault and lynching"[97] .

It was a good preventive measure against those who covered up their own confusion and panic in difficult conditions of hostilities by using weapons against subordinates without any reason, by arbitrariness and swearing in the arena.

P. D. Barabolya:

The deputy head of the political department, Shokhin, at that time (when appointing the commanding staff of the company. - Yu. R.) only sketched our perspective in general terms. Yes, he, in fact, could not say anything definite. It was something new, unknown. And yet wise

life, the political worker found the right words: "Never, not for a minute, forget that there will be people in your subordination ..."

(S. 356.)

Participants in the war generally speak highly of the morale of the penalty box. True, this was by no means always expressed in the usual forms and did not fit, for the life of me, into the lines of political reports "upstairs".

M. G. Klyuchko:

Neither "Hurrah!", nor "For Stalin!" the penalty box did not shout ... We went on the attack with obscenities. Yes, and how to shout "For Stalin!", If he, in fact, sentenced them to death ...

V. I. Golubev:

They went on the attack - "For the Motherland, for Stalin" did not shout. Matyuki completely ... That was "Hurrah!" penal company. There was no time for Stalin.

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

I have heard: the penalty box, going on the attack, allegedly held back the usual "Hurrah". Where does this nonsense come from? Punishers shouted "Hurrah" whenever they went on the attack or defended, they shouted, perhaps more and louder than others, since they often had to be in fierce fights, where the battle cry not only gave spirit, but also, importantly, served as a voice communication to the combatants. There was a rumor along the front that the penalty box instead of "Hurrah" was cursing. This is nonsense. Mat, it should be noted, was the second after

"Hurrah" was the battle cry of our entire army, and the penalty box in this case did not differ from others.

The front foreman, head of the radio station of a separate communications regiment, which provided the headquarters of the 3rd Army, General A.V. Gorbatov, and now retired G.A. Vlasenko, had a chance to see the fighters of the penal battalion in combat affairs with his own eyes.

"My personal impression of their behavior on the front line is that in the vast majority they were decent people," he recalled. - I will even say - high duty and high military morale. Of course, initially they were all different, and everyone had their own previous guilt. Nearby could be an elderly quartermaster technician who was wasted somewhere in the rear and a young dunce lieutenant who was late from vacation or got into a drunken fight because of a pretty doctor. But there came a moment of inner transformation, a moment of awareness of readiness for self-sacrifice, and these people became united in the fact that they went into battle as if they were going to prayer.

I remember a detail: among themselves they communicated on "you". Cursing was considered bad manners. Well, if we reject the arrogance, then, surely, let's assume such [their] motive: "Let me be wounded, let me die, so they will rehabilitate me! And the family in the rear will receive money according to the restored officer's certificate ... "[98]

P. S. Amosov:

I arrived at the OSHB on the eve of the new year of 1944. Before the battle, the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Rudik, made a short speech: "Comrades, tomorrow you will get the right to regain your honest name again. The offensive begins. You must affirm the honor of our battalion, show the skill, bravery and courage of Russian officers. You are the commanders

know how to fight. We will not command you." It turns out that he completely trusted us.

Given the motley composition of the penalty box, the command and political staff had to resort to non-traditional means of education.

M. I. Suknev:

As luck would have it, a battalion of signalmen stood up in the forest nearby from the reserve before the distribution! Yes, one is better than the other! Odessans immediately came to me, they avoided Commissioner Kalachev. They ask to be allowed to invite girls of signalmen to visit, only for one evening, in their "adits".

"Comrade battalion commander, we will bring you the most beautiful one!" - suggested one, with whom we will meet again in Odessa after the war ...

I know if you refuse - in battle the first bullet is mine! What to do? We'll have to resolve, but at the same time get the word to the soul! Otherwise, neither they nor I can avoid trouble. They will take a walk, sort it out in pairs ... I say:

- One main condition: silence and no unnecessary libations, comrades! At midnight, so that none of the signalers were in the battalion's location. I'm not supposed to be at your masquerade ball!

One hundred thanks to me. And the

night passed half merrily, but by morning everything was peaceful and quiet. Even our "Smersh" missed this "ball", but Commissar Kalachev, my friend, said nothing. From this hour I have become more than a comrade among the Odessans and Rostovites, the serious thieves' world, — GOD!

In subsequent battles, they tried to protect me from stray bullets, exposing themselves, fearing to lose "such" battalion commander ... By the way, my guard was a platoon of submachine gunners from Odessa. This platoon was also a reserve in battle.

(S. 153–154.)

After the film "Penal Battalion" one cannot avoid mentioning the possibility of a priest being among the penalty box. Religious preaching in the location of a military unit (any, not just a penal one), as well as the participation in hostilities of a man in a cassock, in those days of militant atheism were completely excluded: neither the commander, nor the political worker, nor the representative of the special department would simply allow this. The priest could only appear in the unit as part of a delegation from the rear that arrived to present gifts to the soldiers (and even then rather hypothetically).

E. L. Golbraikh:

Blessing the penalty box before the fight is bullshit, a mockery of the truth and unworthy flirting with the Church. This was not and could not be in the Red Army.

Of course, it is unacceptable to go to extremes and assert that all the penalized prisoners, without exception, were distinguished by heightened patriotism, sacredly observed the requirements of military regulations and military camaraderie, and professed high morality. The war brought together a variety of people in penal units, whose life paths would hardly have crossed under other conditions. Yesterday's officer, for whom honor is more precious than life, and a criminal who escaped from behind barbed wire in the hope of continuing his wild life. Accidentally or due to an unfavorable situation, a stumbled warrior is also an inveterate dodger who knows how to get away with it. A noble man, strong in spirit - and one who, depending on the situation, is capable of both a good deed and a dishonorable act. Not everyone treated the government equally favorably, blaming it for the broken fate of their own or the fate of their family - dispossessed, special settlers. So, I think, there is nothing to be surprised at the facts and treason on the part of the penalized, and desertion, and atrocities from which the civilian population suffered.

M. I. Suknev:

Two basmachi penalists made crossbows: from a distance of several meters they shot themselves in the palms of their rifles. This was punishable by execution ...

In the same hollow-ravine, I put five submachine gunners from Odessa to execution. A volley - one was shot. They put a second, healthy man. Volley - and past! Another volley - and also past! In tsarist times, Odessans said, during executions, if the rope broke or the bullet did not hit the condemned, he was left alive. Odessans are a walking encyclopedia: you can't hear enough from them ... "Saving the situation", Chekist Dmitry Antonovich Proskurin

pulled out his pistol from his holster and, aiming, with a grin, as usual, killed the sentenced man with a shot!

(S. 157–158.)

P. D. Barabolya:

Just a week later, when we were just looking at newcomers, our separate penal company was literally shocked by the report of a severe emergency. Two people from the platoon of senior lieutenant Vasily Chekalin, pretending to be such simpletons, asked for a visit to elderly people who lived on the outskirts of Kilyakovka. After a short acquaintance, they killed the old man, raped his 12-year-old granddaughter and threw him and his grandmother into the basement, blocking the entrance with junk. Then the inveterate criminals (the name of one of them, a hefty and arrogant fellow, I remember - Nikitin) committed a pogrom in the courtyard of the unfortunate people.

An experienced investigator quickly got on the trail of the bandits. A quick and fair verdict was passed against them by the visiting session of the military tribunal: "Shoot!"

Rear Admiral Bondarenko, a member of the Military Council of the Volga Flotilla, who specially came to us on this unusual occasion, addressed the hushed formation of the people of the entire company present at the public execution, and delivered an angry speech. There is no need to retell it. I will only say that, as it seemed to me, everyone, without exception, was ready to carry out the sentence personally. This, however, was done by a special detachment of the NKVD. When his fighters took their rifles at the ready, Nikitin could not stand it. Falling to his knees, this thug begged to have mercy on him, repented of his deed, swore that he was ready to go even now into the thick of battle, even into hell. The shots cut off belated spells ... At twenty-

three years old, I had seen enough of death in the face, I saw how people die. How many times the heart sank at the same time! But the public execution of two bandits did not arouse the slightest compassion.

(S. 357–358.)

E. A. Golbraikh:

My company ended the war in the Baltics, and then this land was already considered Soviet territory, and Lithuanians and Latvians were already Soviet citizens, respectively. For this reason, our "criminal company" behaved relatively decently. According to the law of wartime, banditry was punishable by execution on the spot. Everyone wanted to live. But there was one shameful incident that tarnished our company. At the very end of the war, our penal, a Georgian by the name of Miladze, raped several women in the farms closest to the location of the company. They caught him after May 9th and, instead of a well-deserved "capital measure", he received only eight years in prison. And it was necessary to put it against the "wall"!

I. N. Tretyakov:

There were gross violations. I remember two cases of going to the enemy. One was successful, in the second case the defector was eliminated. There were cases of going to the rear. They were sent on the wanted list from among the fines. If found, then the guys dealt with the deserters themselves and, as they say, without

the use of weapons. A painful question is about the attitude towards prisoners. People, as you know, are not angels. Deprived of "wings" and those who had a chance to fight the long roads of the war. Who else, but the author is captivated by the frankness of the front-line soldiers themselves, many of whom do not seek to smooth out sharp life conflicts, paint blissful pictures of sheer mercy towards enemy soldiers and officers who raised their hands up, and the civilian population of Germany. Everything happened in the war. But precisely because the participants in the battles themselves are not inclined to hide "sins", the attempts of other publicists and literary critics to show the Red Army devoid of any moral brakes are just as shameful[99] .

E. A. Golbraikh:

Now you don't understand this, but then ... By the end of the war, bitterness reached its extreme limits, and on both warring sides. In the heat of battle, even if the German raised his hands, they could shoot, as they say, "in the course of the play." There were dozens of cases when the same, "already surrendered enemy" ran past and raised a machine gun from the ground and fired at the backs of the attackers. And if the German after the battle crawled out of the trench with his hands up, then his chances of surviving were quite high. And if another twenty "comrades" surrendered with him, as a rule, no one will touch them. B

again an example. Rota continues to fight. There are twenty of us left, and we need to carry out the task further. Eight Germans were taken prisoner. Where can I get two or three extra fighters for escort? Hundreds of captured Romanians were sent to the rear, without an escort. And the Germans ... The company commander gives the order: "To the expense." A fighter with a light machine gun shoots the Germans ... Everyone is silent ... In a minute we go further on the attack ...

What the Nazis did on our land is unforgivable! How many times have we seen the bodies of our guys torn to pieces, who were captured by the Germans ... Near Shauliai, the Germans drove out the neighboring rifle regiment from the village of Kuzhi and captured our medical battalion, located in a two-story building. Our company was thrown to the rescue of the infantry. But we couldn't get through! The tanks blocked the approaches to the village and shot at us point-blank. We retreated to a high-rise and saw through binoculars how the Nazis threw our wounded out of the windows and burned them alive ... What kind of prisoners can we talk about after that?

Penalty prisoners were taken relatively rarely ... This is a fact. Many families died, houses were destroyed. People took revenge ... And what kind of reaction was to be expected? SS men, tankmen and "Vlasovites" were often killed right on the spot. We had soldiers who had passed German captivity. After all the horrors that they experienced, all the words of political officers about humanity were empty words for them ... Repeatedly, when I

tried to stop the execution of a prisoner, my comrades told me: "Why do you feel sorry for them? They have decimated your nation!" It pains me to remember all this ... There were strict orders prohibiting the massacre of prisoners of war, in many divisions they were strictly observed. I saw a lot of fines convicted for shooting prisoners, but ...

The front-line soldier draws attention to the fact that it was not line officers who sinned with executions, but the staff "servants". "Heroes of the second echelon" really liked to shoot at the unarmed.

Chapter

5 We do not write: "Consider a communist"

Particular attention should be paid to the procedure for the release and rehabilitation of penalized changers. It was clearly defined by the Regulations on penal battalions and penal companies of the active army. Most

importantly, the period of stay in the penal unit could not exceed the period specified in the order of the commander or the verdict of the military tribunal, on the basis of which the serviceman was sent here, and in any case amounted to no more than three months.

Very often, this period was reduced, no matter how bitterly, by an enemy bullet, shell or mine. All the Changelings who died in battle were posthumously rehabilitated, their criminal record (in case they were sent to the penal unit by a military tribunal) was removed. Their families were assigned a pension in the amount determined by the salary of the monetary content of the position that the deceased held before being sent to the penal unit.

All those penalized, whom the changeable front-line fate covered with a wing from death, were released on three grounds: a) in case of a wound received at least on the first day; b) ahead of schedule for military distinction; c) upon departure of the appointed time, we will tell you more about it.

Release on injury

Changelings who were wounded in battle, regardless of the length of stay in the penal unit, on the proposal of the battalion or company command, were recognized by the military council of the front, the army as having served their sentence and were restored in all rights. Their criminal record was removed, which, if possible, was announced before the formation, in a solemn

Stop. Upon recovery, such military personnel were to be sent for further service in regular units.

in the former military rank and in a position no less than the former. In the event of demobilization due to injury or disability, they were assigned a pension based on the salary of the monetary content of the position that the soldier held before being enrolled in the penal unit.

P. S. Amosov:

With the restoration of rights was not delayed. Already in the medical battalion, when filling out the medical card, they indicated to me the former military rank - lieutenant and the unit from which I arrived in the penal battalion.

E. A. Golbraikh:

The fine was withdrawn on the first wound ... After the wounded, a petition was sent to the military prosecutor to remove the criminal record. This concerned mainly demoted officers, but sometimes criminals were also written for their courage and heroism.

Very rarely, and, as a rule, if, after being wounded, the penal did not leave the battlefield or performed a feat, they were presented for a reward. We did not know about the results of our petitions, there was no feedback.

P. D. Barabolya:

In fairness, it must be said that the cases of those who washed away the guilt with "first blood" were very quickly considered. Their convictions were expunged without delay, and after hospitals or medical battalions they never returned to our 610th penalty area.

(S. 360.)

The range of vivid feelings experienced by the former officer, when it was a stone's throw before the release, is conveyed by the memories of the former front-line soldier Yu. Ivanov, who had the opportunity to repeatedly participate in attacks together with the penalty box. In one of the fierce battles, on the orders of the battalion commander, he, the tank commander, had to leave the combat vehicle and raise the penal battalion soldiers who lay down to attack. The machine-gun and artillery fire of the Nazis pressed people to the snow and literally did not allow them to raise their heads. But it was necessary to rise, because without the support of the infantry, a tank attack would have bogged down.

Until now, the front-line soldier remembers the picture that struck him:

“Climbing the slope of the ravine, I saw a wounded penalist, pressing his left hand on the bloody right sleeve of his jersey. His eyes burned insanely. He stared at me and spoke with a transition to the cry: “Alive! You see, it's alive! Redeemed with blood! I'm the captain again! Captain!” At first I thought that he was “crazy”. It happened like that. No, I see, quite sane. After all, fines for being wounded were given the right to have their convictions expunged and reinstated in rank and position”[100] .

And how not to understand a person! Even the physical pain from the wound he received is not able to dampen the happiness from the realization that he is clean before the law, that the nightmare of a court-martial, demotion, punishment (it is possible that undeserved) is behind him. It is in vain to think that the penalty box is glad only for the opportunity to withdraw from the battle due to the wound. Yes, of course, this circumstance also warms him, but most of all, no doubt, he rejoices at the return to the officer ranks. There will be new fights ahead and, it is possible, even more cruel than the one from which he had just emerged. But even if a person dies, then not a penal private, but an officer, a commander. Life - to the Motherland, honor - to no one It happened that other dodgers tried to abuse the humanity shown to the wounded. "N. V. Semenenko went to the hospital, leaving the machine gun and not reporting to anyone, due to illness, without expiating his guilt. Bluvshstein Yakov Aronovich, Valchuk Karp Pavlovich fraudulently, under the guise of: the first -

shell-shocked, and the second with a slight tangential wound left the battlefield, "reported on September 20, 1944 the commander of a rifle company of the 9th Special Guards Brigade of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Captain Bazelyev[101] . Judging by that that these soldiers were named among those who were not subject to rehabilitation, their attempts to evade the battle proved futile.

War veterans also recall something similar with bitterness.

A. V. Pylytsyn:

Unfortunately, there were other kinds of "exploits" of the penalty box. Every day ... the Nazis made powerful artillery attacks on us ... We have noticed before, in our opinion, a strange, in our opinion, feature of the notorious German accuracy - to carry out these raids at a certain time of the day, almost every time after 9 pm. And although by this time everyone was trying to stay, as a rule, in the trenches, they suddenly began to appear among the penalty box, lightly wounded by shrapnel in soft tissues, usually in the buttocks. Well, as soon as the penalty box is wounded, shed blood, it means that he has atoned for his guilt with all the ensuing consequences. And when the number of such cases became suspicious, our special officers managed to find out the causes and technology of these injuries. It turns out that during an artillery attack, under the roar of shell explosions, the "inventors" of this method threw a hand

grenade into some kind of wooden shed, and then picked out its fragments from its walls. After that, a bullet was taken out and thrown out of the submachine gun cartridge, half of the gunpowder was poured out and a fragment of a suitable size was inserted instead of the bullet. And then it's a matter of technology. In the next artillery attack, this machine gun was fired at some soft spot - and received a "slight wound", which means the desired freedom. True, when this trick was figured out, almost all the "cunning" were caught in the troops and tried again, now

for intentional self-mutilation and actual desertion from the penal battalion. Not all "wise men" returned to SB. Some, taking into account their previous "merits", were sentenced to the highest measure and shot. The bulk of the witnesses to these executions met the sentences with approval. In general, cowards and similar "inventors" in the officer penal battalion were, to put it mildly,

negative.

(S. 64–65.)

Military Distinguished Service

Penalty boxers could be released from punishment ahead of schedule, having distinguished themselves in battle. This required a decision of the Military Council of the front, the army, made on the basis of the presentation of the commander of the penal unit.

A. V. Pylytsyn:

... The commander of the 3rd Army, Lieutenant General Alexander Vasilyevich Gorbатов, arrived to us ... In his brief, very emotional speech, the general said that we were faced with the combat mission of penetrating behind enemy lines and active operations there, of extraordinary complexity and responsibility. And he hopes that we will fulfill this task with honor. And the nature of the task, he emphasized, testifies to the great trust that the command of the front and the army gives to such a battalion as ours ... whether they will be wounded, "will they shed blood", will they release them from further stay in the penal battalion, will they be restored to their previous ranks, and especially

distinguished, in addition, will be presented to government awards. [...] Instead of the

planned two or three days, our raid lasted for five whole days. During this time, several enemy foot and horse-drawn columns moving towards the front line were defeated, and one night they defeated the headquarters of some German division, blown up several bridges on the road approaching Rogachev from the west ... For the successful

completion of a combat mission, as and the army commander promised that the entire variable composition (penalty boxes) was, as they would say now,

rehabilitated ... We, platoon commanders, urgently wrote characteristics-relations on all the penalized ones, on the basis of which both the release of the penalized ones and their rewarding took place. And our battalion commander Osipov presented the ba

In the matter of awarding, much, if not all, depended on the command. Here, General Gorbatov freed all the penalized who were in the rear of the Germans, regardless of whether they atoned for their guilt with blood or were not wounded, but simply fought honestly and bravely.

I am talking about this here because there were other army commanders, in which the battalion had to perform combat missions of different complexity and danger. However, the reaction of many of them to the award was very different from Gorbatov's. So, the commander of the 65th Army, General Batov Pavel Ivanovich, with any successful action of the battalion, decided to justify only those penalized soldiers who died or were wounded out of action ... Returning to the time we wrote the combat characteristics for the

penalized, I will say that these documents after the signature of the commanders mouth surrendered to the headquarters of the battalion. They already made lists to be released. The path of these papers lay further through the headquarters of the army to the army or front-line tribunal, and from there to the headquarters

front. Orders for reinstatement in officer rank were signed personally by the front commander.

[...]

The rehabilitation procedure consisted in the fact that several groups of representatives from the army and front tribunals and the front headquarters who arrived in the battalion examined our characteristics in the presence of platoon or company commanders, removed our official convictions, and restored them to military ranks. Along with this, decisions were made on the return of awards and the relevant documents were issued. After all this, the officers restored in all their rights were sent, as a rule, to their own units, and the former "encircled" - to the regiment of the reserve officers, from which, by the way, I recently arrived with many of my now comrades.

Some of the "encircled" penalty boxers still had old military ranks, such as "military engineer" or "technician quartermaster" of various ranks. Then they were assigned new officer ranks, however, in the Main one a step or two lower. The same rule was often used in the troops during recertification for new ranks.

(S. 30–44.)

With the permission of the Military Council, the rehabilitation procedure could pass in a simplified manner.

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

After one of the battles, the company commander called me and ordered me to draw up a so-called reinforcing list for all the penalized, in which all the soldier's ammunition is affixed against each name. "We will rehabilitate the

penalized and transfer it to the replenishment of the neighboring regiment," the company commander explained to me. —

The guys fought well. Some stayed with us longer than expected. Consider - all atoned for guilt. Explain it to them. — Where are we? I asked. We are on

formation. A new company is already waiting for us in the reserve regiment. You can't gather everyone in one place, you can't build them, and I announced rehabilitation to several at once, one at a time. To my surprise, neither a sigh of relief, nor an exclamation of joy, nor any other emotions were seen or heard. Some of my platoon even regretted that we would have to part ways...

Then the commanders from the neighboring regiment came to our location, and we handed over the soldiers to them directly to the combat positions.

E. L. Golbraikh:

The company commander had the right to cancel the punishment, [taking into account] the heroism shown, even to those soldiers who did not expire the period of stay in the company specified in the verdict. In fact, it happened like this. After several operations, we had about two dozen fighters left, not wounded, but they participated in the battles, and we have good reason to transfer them to the neighboring rifle regiment. All papers with official stamps are filled in on the spot and issued to soldiers. Goes to headquarters only a list of "redeemed and manifested" signed by the commander. The soldiers surrender their weapons and - "Hello again, Red Army." They will receive weapons in their new units. No meetings of the tribunals or consultations with special officers. Until the last soldier we

fought.

We undertake to assert that the desire not to miss the given chance, in order to whitewash oneself in battle with heroism, was

penalty box rule. They really didn't need to explain what the harsh humanism of Order No. 227 consisted of.

I. N. Tretyakov:

Do not think that only the wounded could be rehabilitated ahead of schedule. By order of our commander, such an order was introduced. In the offensive, a specific combat mission was set. When fulfilling it, as soon as they left the battlefield, a military tribunal was called from the army, he removed the criminal record and handed over a certificate of this.

S. L. Aria:

They left the penal battalion alive either by being wounded, or if during the battle you earned the approval of the commander, and he made an idea about the removal of a criminal record.

... It was near Taganrog on the Southern Front. I participated in reconnaissance in combat. Since the situation was such that either pan or disappeared, I diligently carried out the combat mission. It worked. Immediately after that, I was presented for the removal of a criminal record and within a few days I was summoned to the division headquarters in the tribunal and the criminal record was removed. After that, I was sent to the combat unit.

The rehabilitation of warriors who distinguished themselves by heroism was often massive. So, in the penal units of the 64th Army during the battles near Stalingrad, 1023 people were released from punishment.

For military distinctions, for heroism, it happened that the entire personnel of a company of a penal battalion or a penal company as a whole was released ahead of schedule. A reinforced company of the guards of Captain I. A. Poluektov from the 9th Special Operations Brigade of the 1st Ukrainian Front, consisting of 245 people, supported the actions of one of the rifle regiments of the 24th Samara-Ulyanovsk Iron Rifle Division for 10 days in July 1944. Was

reconnaissance in force was successfully carried out, a tactically advantageous line was captured, a lot of enemy manpower was destroyed, and several firing points were suppressed. Based on the results of the battle of the penalty box, the division commander, Major General F. A. Prokhorov, concluded: "All personnel are subject to withdrawal from the combat formations of the unit for complete rehabilitation and restoration of all rights to the rank of an officer of the Red Army." 11 people, in addition, were recognized as worthy of state awards[102].

This happened with the changelings of the penal company of the 51st Army of the South-Eastern Front, attached to the 91st Rifle Division. At the end of August 1942, in a defensive battle, this company repelled an enemy attack supported by ten tanks. On August 29, being cut off from their troops, the company fought out of the encirclement. On September 1, she already participated in an offensive battle and only retreated to her original positions by order. The soldiers and commanding staff of the company carried the wounded for 60 kilometers. By order of the Military Council of the 51st [103] Army, the title of penal was removed from the — .

company. Several examples of this kind are contained in the documents of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR. Thus, the entire personnel of the OSHR of the 116th Infantry Division, by order of the Military Council of the 31st Army, was expelled ahead of schedule from the penal company and transferred to combined arms units, and the company was disbanded. It

is interesting to follow the process of release from punishment. penalty box of the 1st shock army:

"In March, along with replenishment, 1,720 penal soldiers arrived in the 53rd and 7th Guards Rifle Divisions of the 1st Shock Army. 1200

penalists arrived in the 53rd Guards SD, of which three companies were formed. The 1st company was attached to the 161st Guards Rifle Regiment. The regiment was tasked with liberating the villages of Verevkino and Kozlovo. The regiment completed this task, the penalty box was the first to break into the village. One of the penalty boxers was the first to go up the hill and hoisted a red flag there, but was immediately wounded. The penalty box fought selflessly and courageously. Among

the penalty box had a large loss of killed and wounded - about 60% of the personnel.

Major General Kleshnin and the commander of the penal company, Captain Belozertsev, gave a good assessment to the fighters of the penalized. Immediately after the battle, 50 people received guards badges. From March 19 to March 22, 40 requests from the command for release from punishment were granted.

In the 53rd army penal company in the first days of March, 520 penalists arrived. From March 9 to March 20, 1943, the company took part in the battles for the capture of the village of Borok and the village of Semushkina Gorushka. During the fighting, 369 were wounded, 100 were killed. Of the number of fines, only 3 people were convicted. In the first days of the fighting, 3 servicemen of the penal company were presented for awards. By March 22, 100 petitions for release from punishment were received, 3 more Red Army soldiers of the penal company were presented for awards. In addition, 60 more applications will be received in the near future"[104] .

Release after the appointed time

Those penalists who served the term appointed by order of the commander or the military tribunal were released unconditionally, no one had the right to extend the time of their stay in the penal unit. Although in practice it was rarely possible to be released day after day. There could be many reasons for this: a multi-day battle in which the variable took part, red tape with paperwork, etc.

On the whole, the following procedure was in effect: the commander of a penal battalion, company (it was he, and not the commander of the division or regiment to which they were attached at that time, and not a special officer) prepared a submission to the military council of the front or army for the release of such a category of variables "after the expiration of the term stay." If the submission was approved, they were restored to the previous positions and titles.

P. D. Barabolya:

... The Germans rolled back to Stalingrad, and for its southern outskirts we again had to fight not for life, but for death. The company soon found itself close to the department store, around which, as is well known, fierce fighting broke out. Later, on the last day of January 1943, we saw a picture about three hundred meters away that became truly historic. In the ring of our fighters, holding their machine guns at the ready, groups of captured Nazi generals and officers, as well as soldiers, are moving dejectedly. Then it became known that Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus himself was in one of these groups. This episode has become symbolic. He, as it were, fixed the end of the Stalingrad epic ... After arriving in the Moscow region, the remnants of our company were transferred to other, "normal" units. Sailor officers were recalled to the naval semi-crew, which was then located in the current Moscow school named after Zoya and Alexander Kosmodemyansky. The 66th brigade was transformed into the 11th Marine Guards Brigade.

(S. 363–364.)

But rehabilitation was not waiting for everyone and was not formalized automatically. There was an unconditional rule: to atone for guilt, to regain an honest name and remove the stain of a criminal record, the penal could only be active, heroic actions on the battlefield.

A. V. Belyaev:

There was a rehabilitation of only those penalty boxers who atoned for their guilt directly in battle. As far as I remember, we did not have a single case of rehabilitating those who did not participate in the battles. If during his stay in the penal part the serviceman could not distinguish himself, he, having served the due time, left the penal part, but rehabilitation is not

was subject to. Here is an example. On September 10, 1944, the chairman of the military tribunal of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Major General of Justice Podoynitsyn, informed the commander of a separate penal battalion that, according to the tribunal's rulings, 19 persons were denied release from punishment and convictions, since "the data presented on them show that they stay in the disciplinary battalion after the conviction did not show themselves in anything special. And if so, then even after the end of their stay in the penal battalion, they did not receive rehabilitation.

Being transferred to ordinary rifle units, they were still considered to be serving sentences. The chairman of the military tribunal of the front explained: only if "in the new unit they prove themselves to be staunch defenders of the Motherland, then at the request of the command of the unit, the military tribunal of the front will again consider the issue of them and by a new definition of the tribunal they can be completely released from serving their sentence by sentence with removal of a criminal record"[105]. So passively "winding the term" in the penal battalion was clearly futile.

It happened that rehabilitation was granted to those who distinguished themselves in battles not immediately, but over time.

N. Tarasenko:

In the course of the battle, two of my comrades and I found ourselves on the left flank of the battalion's chain and, with our intense fire, ensured a successful attack. The battle was over for us, the success of the battalion was picked up and developed by the infantry units. Me and two of my comrades were recalled to the battalion

headquarters and an amnesty was declared. In the confusion of front roads, I found my regiment. He suffered great losses. Replenishment came, and ordered to form a platoon. Started heavy, with big

losses in battles in the forefield of Koenigsberg. In the battles he received a concussion, wound. He refused hospitalization.

I met Victory Day in the echelon. On August 9, 1945, war was declared on Japan, and the regiment crossed the border of Manchuria. Hubei, Bamiyantun, Mudanjiang, Harbin are the stages of this lightning war. At the end of the fighting, I was recalled. For the steadfastness shown, heroism in battles in East Prussia and in the war with Japan, by the decision of the tribunal, he was completely released from serving his sentence with the removal of a criminal record. Orders for the

restoration of penalized officers and military ranks were issued on the basis of petitions from the commanders of penal units and were drawn up separately for the following categories: the dead, the wounded, released ahead of schedule for exploits on the battlefield, who had fully served their terms. Here is an example for the 1st Ukrainian Front. On July 19, 1944, the

commander of the 9th Special Guards Guards, Lieutenant Colonel Lysenko, petitioned the military council of the front for the rehabilitation of 91 servicemen due to the fact that they "showed themselves disciplined in battles with the German occupiers, showed courage, courage and atoned for their guilt before Motherland". The details of the battles are given, the actions in which gave grounds to the commander of the penal battalion to file a petition. During a four-day battle, a group of penalists, supporting the 151st regiment of the 8th rifle division, captured and entrenched itself on an unnamed height near the village of Mlodyaty, Stanislav region. 11 German infantry counterattacks, accompanied by self-propelled guns, supported by artillery-mortar fire, repulsed the penalty box, destroying 200 enemy soldiers and officers, two tanks, nine heavy machine guns. From this group of variables for rehabilitation are presented: for injury - two people, for differences in battles - two people, after the expiration of the period of stay in the penal unit - 87 people[106] .

In addition to the detailed biographical data of each of the officers, the orders for the restoration of fines in the rights of officers and military ranks necessarily contained information that made it possible to judge on the basis of which the person received rehabilitation. For example, here is an extract from

the order for the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front dated June 11, 1944:

"The former commander of the pulrota of the 4th Infantry Regiment of the 10th Reserve Infantry Brigade, Captain Mikhail Sergeevich Khokhlov, born in 1913, a native of the Bashkir SSR, Ufa, st. Tabotskaya, 41. Russian, employee, non-party, education: general - 8 classes, military - infantry school in 1938, in the Red Army since 1934. He arrived at the battalion on April 7, 1944 for a period of 2 months by the verdict of the military tribunal of the 10th zebra, convicted under Art. 193-3 (for unauthorized abandonment of the battlefield. - Yu. R.) for a period of 8 years ITL. During his stay in the battalion, he showed himself to be a brave and determined fighter. On June 13, 1944, participating in intelligence, he acted energetically and boldly. He received a blind wound in the lumbar region with damage to the right renal capsule, was hospitalized "[107] .

rehabilitated military personnel issued the corresponding document. Here, for example, is the certificate received by S. L. Aria at the military tribunal of the 151st Infantry Division:

"Issued to senior sergeant Ariya Semyon Lvovich in that his conviction was expunged for his courage and courage in the fight against fascism by the decision of the military tribunal of the 151st SD of March 17, 1943. Chairman of the military tribunal 151 SD military lawyer of the 3rd rank Sorokin.

As they say, briefly but exhaustively.

Rehabilitation, as required by the Regulations on penal battalions, companies of the army, sought to be carried out in a solemn atmosphere, although this was not always possible. Before the formation - to heighten the educational effect - an order was announced

troops, representatives of the headquarters and the political department of the front returned orders and medals, and even field epaulets with the same insignia, to the officers restored to their rights. The rehabilitated were handed instructions to leave: some - to their former unit, others - to a separate regiment of the reserve officers, and the third - to the personnel department of the district.

The war is finally over. What brought this variable composition can be judged by one of the first decisions of the Military Council of the 4th Ukrainian Front (similar decisions were adopted on all fronts). The commanders of the penal units were instructed to submit petitions for release from punishment and the removal of a criminal record against all fighters-variables convicted by military tribunals and expiated their guilt in battles, but whose behavior deserved a review of their sentences. Approval of sentences by military tribunals in relation to those sentenced to death The Military Council of the Front removed from the competence of the military councils of armies, commanders of corps and divisions and took over [108] pages were discussed repeatedly. On May 7, 1945, the

commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov, issued an order in accordance with which all the battalion's paramen were reinstated in military ranks and rights as officers. Each of them received an order to leave for his former part. Up until July 20, 1945, the battalion continued to receive those of the servicemen who were at fault, whom the end of the war found on their way to the OShB. They were immediately expelled from the battalion, and the unit itself was soon disbanded, as stated in the last order for the 8th separate penal battalion of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany dated August 7, 1945. At the end of the war, the issue of rehabilitation was similarly resolved

[109].

Variables and in penal companies.

E. A. Golbraikh:

Courland. It has already been reported that Berlin has been taken. We took a high-rise, we are preparing for an attack, the sappers made passages in the minefields in front of us. Opposite were German pillboxes and four tanks dug into the ground. Three hundred meters to the Germans. The day "did not promise to be pleasant." We look: white flags stagger over the German trenches and disappear. Everyone sighs in disappointment and swears. Suddenly a white flag rose firmly above the parapet. Just in case, we canceled the artillery preparation. No one goes to our trenches, apparently, they are afraid to get a bullet in the back from their own. Everyone looks at me. I was the only one in the company who knew German, and sometimes I had to interrogate prisoners. A fighter standing next to me says: "Yes, if anything, we will leave a wet place from them." And they will leave ... Such a unit ... Only I will not see that very wet place. I stand defiantly on the parapet, take off my belt with a pistol, put the machine gun on the ground. I take out a handkerchief, vaguely reminiscent of white in color, and on stiff legs I walk towards the enemy along the cleared path. Silence. The front is frozen. Suddenly steps behind. One of our penalty boxers, a young and healthy guy, caught up with me. We went on together and got to the German defense intact. They went down to the Germans in a trench. And they rally, shout, throw themselves at us. Half of them with signs of the SS troops. Yes, they hit ... My soldier is nervous, sweat rolls off him like a hail, and I also "caress" a grenade in my pocket ... The Germans speak quickly, I can't make out the words from excitement. Brought to oberst. And I have a stupor, except for "Stalin Gut, Hitler Kaput", I can't say anything intelligibly. With difficulty I mastered myself and in a commanding voice I declare: "We guarantee life, food, surrender, go out in a column through the passage in the minefield, follow the formation to our location," etc., etc. Oberst only nods his head, he realized that I was a Jew, before talking to me is not humiliated. Let's go back, all these meters I was waiting for a shot in the back. It worked out. When the Germans went to surrender, the soldiers shouted "Hurrah!" and hugged. Everyone understood that the war was over f

disarmed, "liberated" from the watch and sent further to rear.

On the occasion of the end of the war, the entire personnel of our company was amnestied.

The question is natural, did the stay of a person in the penal part affect his future fate?

E. A. Golbraikh:

Let's say the penal atoned for his guilt with blood and returned to a regular military unit. Did the fact of his stay in the penal divisions affect his future career or awards? They usually returned with a demotion, and sometimes in rank. Many former penal officers at the end of the war commanded battalions and regiments. I knew these two personally. In rewards for subsequent combat achievements, as a rule, they were limited. In the headquarters offices of reinsurers

always enough.

The matter, of course, was not only in reinsurers and intriguers. Speaking abstractly, the legislation did not provide for the infringement of the rights of the fined after serving their sentence. Moreover, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, on the occasion of the victorious end of the war with Nazi Germany, announced an amnesty on July 7, 1945 (in the Armed Forces, the decree was announced for leadership on July 18). It meant that military personnel convicted with a suspended sentence until the end of the war - and such among the fined were the majority, were released from punishment, and their criminal record was expunged[110] .

But among those who passed the penal units, there were many who were previously captured or surrounded, living in the occupied territory, and people who had such a fate,

the authorities frankly did not trust. There were frequent cases when, at the end of the war, a prisoner of the fascist camp, who by this time had already proved loyalty to the country with his own blood, including in the penal unit, was already sent to the Soviet camp. Yes, and for those who escaped the funnel of the Gulag, the path of life developed severely.

I. I. Korzhik:

Many times after the penal battalion I tried to return to aviation. Indeed, by that time I had 150 night sorties on my account, I was awarded the Order of the Red Banner. But I was sent to the deep rear, to the reserve regiment... Not to mention that the sword of Damocles hung over the penalty box for a long time even after their demobilization.

The feelings of a front-line soldier are understandable. Caustic, like wormwood, is the bitterness of a man who selflessly fought for the Fatherland, but never felt the full confidence of the state. He was shot down over the territory of the enemy, went into the partisans, until the very connection with his own did not let go of his weapons, after which he was insultingly equalized by the penal battalion with some coward or embezzler, but honestly won back there. However, in the eyes of the authorities, he remained a second-class person.

Broken by the over-vigilance of the "competent authorities", the fate of I. I. Korzhik, thousands and thousands of his brothers in misfortune - a weighty accusation to the Stalinist regime, which often treated people like chips during logging, like dust in the wind. But the front-line soldiers, the winners of fascism, did not want to put up with such a fate.

N. Tarasenko:

My fate is the fate of many officers who went through penal battalions and washed away their guilt with blood. And attempts to denigrate them by comparison with traitors,

traitors, clothe in the image of criminal rabble, at least dishonorably and inhumanely.

Everything is so clear here that any addition is superfluous.

Chapter

6 And if you don't catch lead in your chest...

Of course, we do not have any universal scales at our disposal, on the bowls of which it is enough to put a contribution to the victory of an individual or a huge team - and it will be all clear who and what contribution made to the victory. But if we proceed from objective criteria - the number of penal units and the number of their personnel, weapons, combat capabilities, then any unbiased person has to admit: the assertions that the war would not have been won without penitentiaries are not just an exaggeration, they clearly go against the truth. . The question involuntarily arises: if the penalty box played a key role, then where were the aviators, artillerymen, tankers, sappers, soldiers of other branches of the military and what were they doing in the war?

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

Let the idle battle-players from the pen do not attach great or even exceptional importance to penal divisions. Due to their small numbers and weak firepower, they were used in local sectors of the front, ensuring the success of the regiments, divisions, in operational subordination of which they were.

Let's try, based on the documents and stories of front-line soldiers, to determine what tasks the Penitentiaries were up to.

E. A. Golbraikh:

There is an opinion that penal units played a decisive role in the war and they are almost the main creators of the Victory. It's a delusion.

Yes, the penalty box fought desperately. But the situation was such that it was not easier for ordinary units. An army can occupy along the front, depending on the situation, from several kilometers to several tens of kilometers. In the latter case, the command will not transfer a penal company to the desired sector. The movement of this not quite ordinary unit along the front line, in the rear, is fraught with trouble. The "best of the best" were not recruited into penal companies. Quite the contrary... And an ordinary rifle battalion, fresh, or from a neighboring sector, and very rarely the one that occupies the defense here, will be assigned to reconnaissance in force. Pure psychology - a soldier settles down to his trench, to his trench, and it is more difficult for him to leave the habitable place and rise to the attack. This is taken into account.

We have already mentioned the small number of penal units: the share of penal units in the total strength of the active army ranged from 2.7% in 1943 to 1.3% in 1945. Their tactical capabilities were also very modest. Since they were ordinary rifle formations, sometimes incomplete, and equipped with light weapons, they were simply not able to solve any large-scale combat missions. In most cases, the penalties were assigned tasks of an auxiliary nature, using them in the interests of the formations and units to which they were temporarily attached: a penal battalion to a rifle division, a company to a rifle regiment.

Despite the relatively modest combat capabilities of the penal units, "the Germans were especially afraid of the penal ones - the people were desperate! He went for everything ... - recalled war veteran I. M. Bogatyrev. - The sites for the battle were given the most difficult. And the penalty boxers are desperate people, they went on the attack together ... Shoulders by the belt, cuttings down, so they advised to cover the chest. And in full growth! They knew that they had to, and they went ... He will not run away, the penalty box. Rather, an ordinary soldier will run away. Either he will retreat, or he will surrender as a prisoner ... But the penalized - no, they did not give-up "[111] .

M. G. Klyuchko:

Were the Germans afraid of fines? You probably know, yes. After all, an attack by a penal unit is a psychological attack on people who are deliberately sentenced to death. They couldn't retreat, they could only move forward. Imagine people who run chain after chain at you and yell at you with a good obscenity.

Another veteran does not agree with this opinion in everything.

E. A. Golbraikh:

All these stories that the Germans' hamstrings shook at the sight of an attacking penal company have no foundation. The Germans did not care deeply who was attacking them. Psychologically, it was probably hard for the Germans to fight against the penal officer battalions, the desire of the penal battalions to atone for their "sins" before the Motherland with blood is too great. But the Germans fought intelligently, skillfully and bravely, no matter how hard it is to admit.

As a rule, the penalty boxers were in the near rear, ready to move to the front line at any moment. The command of the line units had them, as they say, on the hook when it was necessary to solve a one-time task - to conduct reconnaissance in force in order to identify firing points and lines of defense of the enemy; break through the line of enemy defense; take a height, a small settlement by a swift assault, seize a bridgehead; by attacking the German defense, imitate a false direction of attack, pin down enemy forces in order to create favorable conditions for line units in their offensive; to cover as a rearguard units retreating to previously prepared positions, etc. They were thrown into battle without delay, very often without even having time to complete their staffing.

P. S. Amosov:

January 5, 1944, 8:10 a.m. From our side, a tracer shell cut through the morning haze, then the Katyushas and all the artillery of the front spoke. At first, taken aback by surprise, the enemy began to answer. Penal boxes were located 300 meters in front of the front line. They lay on the snow, there were no shoulder blades. I was number two in the light machine gun. Even before the attack, number one Nikolai Rychagov was wounded and crawled away to be dressed. I was left alone with the machine gun. When the turn came to the last disk, I, having thrown the belt over my shoulder, got up, and everyone silently went on the attack. They ran and fell, walked and flew up into the air. Even before the attack, a fragment hit me in the left shoulder, but I didn't go for the dressing - it's not easier from behind, everything was mixed up. Explosion... I was thrown to the ground. I woke up hearing "Hurrah!" those units that were behind us, and the rumble of late tanks.

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

Penalty guards usually did not attack, but immediately either attacked, counterattacked, or stormed, broke through the defenses, carried out reconnaissance in force, took the "tongue" with battle, etc. - in a word, they made daring raids on the enemy, which successfully put pressure on his psyche.

This was especially noticeable on the Kursk Bulge, at the very beginning of the events. The Germans, moving towards Art. Oboyan, on July 8, they occupied the village of Berezovka. Our penal company, right from the march, was ordered to take it back by storm. It was towards evening, we approached through the corpses and shouted "Hurrah!" with terrible shooting rushed to the village, broke into it. And there was a real crowd of troops and equipment, especially tanks. Everything began to move, a heated battle ensued, and we had to retreat. They did not take the village, but they gave the enemy a good warning. The next day we defended against this armada

supported by artillery and mortars. Three dozen attack aircraft bombed us, mixed the company with the ground, but the penalty box with shouts of "Hurrah!", With desperate shooting, held out until approach of our tanks.

M. G. Klyuchko:

The company received its baptism of fire in Belarus. After forcing the Neman River and breaking through the German defenses, the remnants of our company, 12 people, were surrounded. I had to take it out again. Moreover, the fighters completely changed my clothes, so much so that I looked like an ordinary shepherd. It was in this form that I appeared before the Smersh officer. We were interrogated for three days until they found out that in this area a penal company really took part in breaking through the German defenses, that Junior Lieutenant Klyuchko was a platoon commander.

One of the most common tasks assigned to fines is characterized by a veteran of the Great Patriotic War, I. F. Chernyavsky:

“Penal companies and battalions were involved in conducting reconnaissance in force, which, in the preparation of large offensive operations, made it possible to establish the true front line of the German defense, to make sure that the offensive would be sudden for them. In such cases, a powerful fire raid could replace artillery preparation, and thus the task of going over to the offensive with less ammunition was solved. Otherwise, the enemy could withdraw his troops to a certain depth in advance, and then the artillery preparation could be carried out in areas abandoned by the enemy. This inevitably led to heavy losses and wasted ammunition. Most often, the reconnaissance battalion of the division was involved in reconnaissance in battle, then the penalty box played a supporting role,

attacking the enemy in the most dangerous directions"[112] .—

Another task, also often entrusted to the penalty box, is told by the former commander of the penal battalion.

M. I. Suknev:

On January 14, 1944, the troops of the left wing of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts launched a general offensive, the Novgorod-Luga. After an hour-long operation. ~~tentative~~ ~~to the south~~ to the north of Novgorod, - across Lake Ilmen, threw avalanches at the enemy! .. The roads were cut south to Shimsk and north from Novgorod to Luga. The enemy was completely surrounded and rushed in

these directions. Our battalion of 800 bayonets with 10 mounted and 40 RPDs was dispersed across the highway, to the right and left along the coast of Maly Volkhovets in case the enemy starts breaking through the encirclement along this highway. I personally placed the fighters in trenches, firing points, coordinated the system of rifle and machine gun fire. And we got ready. Later they found out: when the enemy's paths to the south and north were cut off, in Novgorod they were surrounded by up to five thousand German soldiers and officers. These were those who

back in 1941 cleared their way with fire and sword to Leningrad. Choice pieces! My battalion was placed so that the retreating Germans would not

could escape from Novgorod.

(S. 163.)

The story of the commander belongs to the period of the Battle of Stalingrad platoon of the 610th OSHR of the Volga military flotilla.

P. D. Barabolya:

I will not forget one battle with the Nazis, when Elkhin and other settlements on the near approaches to Stalingrad, which we had conquered, were already behind us. The village of Peschanka and the height leaning against it with a mark of 130.6 turned out to be a hard nut to crack on the way. Even before the fighting, the village was completely inconspicuous: perhaps I wouldn't have smoked a hand-rolled cigarette, passing it from end to end. Now only chimneys and torn-up trees remained here. But the Germans fortified Peschanka and that nondescript skyscraper in accordance with all the rules of tough defense. Here and there, the overlapping of bunkers was mounded, artillery positions were guessed in the trenches, impassable, according to

reconnaissance, minefields seemed. We tried to take this line on the move, without careful preparation and fire support. Did not work out. They just suffered unjustified losses. I had to start all over. A few hours before our new attack (it was January 22, when there were literally a few days left before the complete collapse of the Germans near Stalingrad), I, hiding behind the parapet of the trench, peered for a long time at the vague outlines of the German front line. And then I naively thought: maybe they will surrender without a fight, at the mercy of the winners, because it is already quite obvious that they can't get out of the "boiler" in any way? But the enemy, of course, did not even think about such a turn of events. It was a dead night. The "neutral" strip was continuously illuminated by rockets, torn wisps of smoke stretched from somewhere, and cannon fire was incessantly thundering. And it was clear that the opposing side would not leave here so easily,

would not humbly lay down their arms. The frosts were getting stronger - the thermometers were huddled at the forty-degree mark. When the dim moon peeped through the smoky gaps, it seemed to be icy from the unbearable cold. Not to say that we were dressed "for the season." Liquid overcoats and tarpaulin boots turned out to be completely unreliable protection from the

gave vigor to the penalty box. Nevertheless, all of them, feeling a quick victory, were eager to fight. After

reliable artillery preparation, we stormed the Peschanka, and then the height of 130.6. And if I had then been asked which of my subordinates had especially distinguished himself, I would, without hesitation, name all of them without exception. True, from the best I would single out the best - machine gunner Dmitry Ageev.

He worked hard with his Maxim. The already middle-aged fighter (he was, it seems, over forty) at one stage of the battle rescued the entire company. At the most critical moment, when the Germans sensed a weakness on our left flank, on my orders he quickly advanced to the dangerous sector and opened fire without delay. The Germans tried to suppress our firing point, but Ageev did not flinch. Somewhat later, when both Peschanka and the height were in our hands, we saw the corpses of Nazi soldiers, Ageev could safely attribute a large number of them to his combat account. Many Germans were captured, we took a lot of captured weapons. However, they themselves suffered hard: only 22 people remained in my platoon. That's more than fifty!

(S. 362–363)

Due to the specifics of recruitment, the lack of necessary skills and experience among the personnel, except for individual cases, they could not perform, say, reconnaissance or sabotage functions in the enemy rear (this was generally excluded for penal companies).

V. V. Karpov:

Another episode (in the film "Shtrafbat". - Yu. R.). Send for the "language" group of seven people. They are "advised" by the head of the special department - a cruel sadist who does not trust anyone. And suddenly he allows the penalty box

go behind enemy lines. They did not trust the penitentiaries, they were afraid that someone would remain with the Germans. The fines will not return, you yourself will go

to their place. There is also a direct insult to the front-line soldiers in the film. We are talking about an episode when a fighter wounded in reconnaissance is finished off by colleagues so as not to burden themselves upon their return. This absolutely did not happen. I'm not talking about the phenomenon of front-line brotherhood. But also purely for disciplinary reasons. If five went on reconnaissance, then the same number should return. Even the dead were pulled out, and even more so the wounded.

E. A. Golbraikh:

Imagine, a group of penalists went to reconnaissance and did not return. She went missing or was killed on neutral, and no one knows who died and who was captured. What will the company commander say during interrogation in his defense when the special officers saw him "assistance in deliberately going over to the side of the enemy"? Where can we find such a "kamikaze"?.. If the

penal fighters went on reconnaissance, then only together with officers from the company's permanent staff. Yes, they did not take criminals into reconnaissance exits, but former regimental scouts who already had experience in reconnaissance searches. Further, penalty boxers almost never stand on the defensive; this is a strike unit, designed for several attacks, to break through the enemy's defenses. All information about the enemy, including intelligence, is received directly from the operations department and division headquarters. So why should penalized men crawl into reconnaissance, collect "tongues"? A couple of times, before reconnaissance in battle, we were asked, if possible, to capture a German, but they didn't particularly insist, they didn't set the most important task ... But most of all, it infuriates that in the series ("Penal Battalion." - Y. R.), the Germans were imprisoned take almost every single day. Are we fighting morons? At the front, while one

"Language" will be obtained, many reconnaissance groups will fall into the ground with bones. And here?! As if they go to the Palace of Culture to dance, and not behind the front

line. In officer penal battalions, they often went to reconnaissance, but there the commanders trusted the penalists. And with our audience - a special conversation ...

“Penalmen fought desperately”

The spirit of the combat orders of the front-line time, their specificity is conveyed by the details. Thus, on October 2, 1942, the command of the Stalingrad Front 8th OSHB, already well known to our readers, received from the front headquarters on October 2, 1942: to form a marching company of 116 people, to transfer to it a battalion convoy - six horses and three wagons, to equip it with two easel and 12 light machine guns, 36 PPSH assault rifles and 60 rifles and send along the route Ternovka - Shiryaevsky - B. Ivanovka - Loznoye to the commander of the 24th Army, Major General I.V. Galanin. By the end of October 3, concentrate in the village of Sadki.

The first serious losses OSHB suffered in the area of height 108.4, which is near the village of Kotluban. There, having shown courage and courage, the brave 19 fighters-variables and one platoon commander died a death, 28 variables were injured. All the dead were buried on the southern slopes of the same height[113] .

Large-scale independent tasks were rarely assigned to penal units. The same 8th OSHB, which passed from Stalingrad to Berlin, fought for three years without a few months, but, for example, did not liberate a single large settlement during this time.

The fact that the penalty boxers were entrusted with the solution, although the most intense, dangerous, but still private tasks, is remembered, avoiding the temptation to exaggerate their own role, and the majority of front-line soldiers.

A. V. Belyaev:

Our penal battalion was stationed near the front headquarters at the commander's hand, so that, as they say, in case of emergency ... Penal

battalions were used in battles, as a rule, as part of divisions and regiments in the most fortified areas of the German defense. They also carried out independent tasks: they occupied dominant heights to improve defensive positions, counterattacked the enemy who had penetrated our defenses, conducted reconnaissance in force, and broke through enemy defenses. The battalion at full strength was rarely used. And I think not because it was not necessary. The thing is that it took a lot of time to complete the formation ... Therefore, as soon as a company was formed, they immediately brought it into battle.

B. I. Golubev:

A separate army penal company dangles along the entire front of the army. You are exhausted, you dig a trench, you would fall asleep at night, the command: "Rise!" - and a march to another place...

Even when completed, penal units rarely operated in full strength. As a rule, they were divided into groups, which were individually assigned to one or another rifle unit, which also narrowed their already modest tactical capabilities.

The press has already drawn attention to the fact that some misunderstandings regarding the tactical capabilities of penal units arise, among other things, due to the fact that penal battalions are confused with assault battalions. The latter were formed from commanders of the Red Army who had left the encirclement or escaped from captivity after being checked by "competent authorities". Of course, it

doesn't have to be once in a while. It was possible to headlong throw penalty box into battle, not really thinking about the price that would have to be paid for success. But when the penalty parts were used wisely, the results were impressive. A striking example is

actions of the 8th Special Operations Brigade in the Rogachev-Zhlobin offensive operation of the 1st Belorussian Front in February 1944. The commander of the 3rd Army, General A.V. group of skiers. His actions - daring, enterprising - created favorable conditions for the rapid expulsion of the invaders from Rogachev and the interception of their escape routes. Obviously for censorship reasons, in the book, which was published in Soviet times, General of the Army Gorbатов did not specify which units made up the consolidated ski

detachment. And it was formed from the personnel of the 8th separate penal battalion and the special ski battalion of the 120th Guards Rifle Division, and the overall leadership was entrusted to the commander of the OShB, Lieutenant Colonel A. A. Osipov. For Arkady Alexandrovich, the city of Rogachev was native, the battalion commander knew every path in the district.

The memoirs of G. L. Vlasenko, at that time the head of the RSB radio station in the 109th separate communications regiment, which provided the headquarters of the 3rd Army, were published. The former military signalman participated in the specified raid on the enemy's rear as part of a team of radio operators attached to the detachment commander, and thus knows firsthand about him. The skiers were well equipped: each fighter had grenades, a Finnish knife, and was dressed in white camouflage. They were armed with machine guns, anti-tank rifles, heavy machine guns transported on sleds with ski runners. The detachment was given a group of sappers and a platoon of flamethrowers. Under the cover of night, in the wire and minefields of the front line, the sappers made

a passage, and the fighters began a covert advance. However, the enemy soon discovered the detachment. There was no point in masking further, an assault roll followed. They rushed through the enemy trenches, destroying gun crews and soldiers who were in combat guards and dugouts.

It so happened that the special ski battalion of the 120th division, which was moving after the penalized soldiers, was cut off by enemy fire, and only penalized soldiers ended up on the other side of the front. We moved along the banks of the Dnieper in the direction of the village of Ozerishche (in the memoirs of A.V. Gorbатов - Ozerane). Radio operators periodically contacted the headquarters of the 3rd Army. Let's give the floor to General of the Army A.V. Gorbатов:

“We received news from the consolidated squad of skiers. He reached Rogachev itself, but just before the city, the sent reconnaissance met with the enemy, who had settled in the trenches. The detachment commander did the right thing: realizing that the surprise of the attack was lost, he did not get involved in an unequal battle, but led the detachment into the forest and began to operate behind enemy lines. Southeast of Staroye Selo, skiers blocked all roads leading from Rogachev to Madory and Bykhov, including the railway, thereby depriving the Nazis of escape routes and pulling up reserves. During the day, the detachment captured carts, cars and fought with suitable reserves (fire from an ambush, the penalists even destroyed a fascist general. - Yu. R.). Our skiers freed three hundred Soviet citizens whom the Nazis forced at gunpoint to dig trenches .

As part of the detachment, A. V. Pylytsyn, well known to our readers, also broke through the enemy rear.

A. V. Pylytsyn:

Yes, even if we tried to take possession of the city, and even more so - to keep it, we would not succeed. After all, the main forces of the Germans were not defeated, and we had neither artillery, nor armored vehicles, nor even mortars! Our mortar company under the command of Major Pekur ... acted in this raid as a rifle company. And a company of anti-tank rifles and a platoon of knapsack flamethrowers in these conditions was clearly not enough! After all, both in Rogachev itself and near it, the Germans had a large number of troops and equipment. Soon the order was

received to "act", as was foreseen in advance - to smash the rear, which we actively engaged in. We managed to sow a great panic in the camp of the enemy. The battalion operated both in groups and gathering in

one rather powerful fist. Our small groups destroyed enemy equipment. The captured guns, having previously killed their servants, turned in the direction of noticeable concentrations of enemy troops, warehouses, etc. Among the penalized were artillerymen, tankers, even pilots, so it was not difficult to fire a few shots from the guns. Then these guns and mortars were blown up or rendered unusable in another way. They set fire to captured food depots and ammunition depots, took control of crossroads, destroyed suitable enemy military reserves and cut lines of communication. Temporarily taken prisoner ("temporarily", because after interrogations, of course, they were not released, but destroyed) the Germans said that their command believed that a division that had come from somewhere, or even two, and many partisans were operating in the rear ...

Soon, movement towards Rogachev was detected by a large convoy of Germans. A battle ensued ... I must say that the column of our battalion was built in such a way that in its machine gunners, and anti-tank rifle units (PTR), and flamethrowers followed the head, and in the main composition, and in the tail. The latter were armed with "ROKS" unfamiliar to us - knapsack flamethrowers with "KS" liquid (for some reason, now, after many years, this liquid, self-igniting in air, is called "Molotov cocktail", then we had no idea about such a name). When the German convoy was seen, the battalion

froze, and as soon as the front cars caught up with our trailing units, heavy fire was opened on the Nazis from all types of weapons we had. At the tail of our column was a PTR platoon under

the command of 19-year-old, but already having solid combat experience and wounds, Senior Lieutenant Pyotr Zagumennikov, with whom I managed to make friends. His fighters managed to knock out the two front cars leading

German motorcade. And this whole considerable cavalcade of cars turned out to be locked on both sides on a narrow road, limited from the sides by deep, loose snow, since the cars closing the convoy had also already been hit by armor-piercers who were at the head of the battalion column. Having fallen under heavy fire, the Fritz, who managed to jump out of the bodies of cars, rushed in a panic in different directions. Some of them, distraught, rushed in our direction, towards the lead whirlwind of machine gunners and submachine

gunners of the battalion. Most of the Germans shouting "Rus partisans!" rushed in the opposite direction from the road and was finished off by the penalty box chasing them. One of the Germans, deftly darting from tree to tree, I couldn't get fire from a machine gun, probably because in the heat of the moment I shot "from the stomach",

without aiming. And then, pulling out his revolver from his holster, he carefully aimed and from the first shot, at a distance of about a hundred meters, he nevertheless laid him down! It was my first personal "trophy"...

Instead of the planned two or three days, our raid lasted for five whole days.

(S. 36–38.)

The story of A. V. Pylytsyn is supplemented by G. A. Vlasenko:

"Near Ozerishche, with an aimed salvo, they killed the German guards, who were driving a crowd of local women and teenagers somewhere. Then there was an oncoming battle - they collided with a German column of 16 covered heavy vehicles on caterpillar and three-axle tracks. They burned all the equipment, not a single enemy soldier was left alive ... Having crossed the frozen Dnieper to the right bank, the penal battalion entered the Madara-Schibrin highway. Moving along the edge of the forest, we reached the railroad track, from where we went further through the forest to the village of Bliznetsy in order to seize a bridgehead on Druti as quickly as possible.

Behind the Twins, the battalion was again attacked, a heavy battle broke out throughout the bridgehead. But the 269th Rifle Division had already gone on the offensive, and it actually rescued the penalized by hitting its own artillery and advancing the infantry. The battalion suffered heavy losses, was forced to retreat a little into the depths of the forest, but retained its bridgehead.

A participant in the raid to Rogachev, A.V. Pyltsyn, also recalls one more case of successful actions by the personnel of the 8th OSHB. On the eve of the operation "Bagration" to liberate Belarus, "language" was urgently needed. Several attempts by the division's reconnaissance company to capture it were unsuccessful. Then the task of getting the prisoner was assigned to the penal battalion. At the beginning, there was an idea of the commander of the 38th division, General G.M. However, the battalion commander A. A. Osipov, avoiding unnecessary losses, and also not wanting to alert the enemy in advance, proposed another solution.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

According to the plan of the battalion commander, our 1st company and units of the PTR company, which was then commanded by Captain Vasily Tsigichko, in the area where my platoon was defending, were supposed to create a noise "appearance" (if you can define it that way) of building a bridge or crossing a river ... For this purpose, several logs were dragged ashore ... and small sapper shovels began to knock on them, simulating either hewing logs, or knocking them together. And on the opposite bank in the coastal bushes, directly opposite this place, they organized a powerful ambush, well camouflaged. There was no

"catch" on the first night. But on the second, which was bright, our observers noticed a group of Germans crawling along the swampy shore to the place of "construction". Quietly, without noise, ours covered them

ambush. They stabbed the Nazis, who resisted and tried to signal their own, with bayonet-knives from SVT (Tokarev self-loading rifles). And three of them, bound and gagged, were brought to this shore, and then, after a cursory interrogation, which was conducted by my clerk-translator Vinogradov, they were sent further - to the headquarters of the battalion.

Three "languages" at once, and one of them is an officer! And he went to 8 penalty boxers who participated in the ambush, material for full early rehabilitation (and also without "redemption by blood") and for awarding, if not orders, but only medals.

(S. 73.)

No less soldierly ingenuity and resourcefulness in solving a similar problem were shown by subordinates of M. I. Suknev. The story, in our opinion, is so interesting and instructive that it is not worth saving space to tell about it.

M. I. Suknev:

January 1944 was approaching, decisive. The scouts of the division, corps, army, finally, could not take the "languages" so needed before the upcoming offensive of our troops. Then one of the staff "wise men" came up with the concept: "reconnaissance in force" behind the "language". The enemy immediately took countermeasures. Puts forward for the night in front of their barriers the posts of machine gunners, above the shore. And as soon as our reconnaissance with a company or even two gets close to the shore, still on the ice, as lighting rockets rise from the main German defense - and ours are visible at a glance. And they are being shot at point-blank range! Reconnaissance in battle was called reconnaissance life...

One day, all the battalion commanders of the corps were called to Artyushenko ..[116] Soon a general offensive would begin. Need "language" by all means!

- Which of the battalions will take the "language", the battalion commander - the order Red Banner. Performers - Red Star!

... We parted ways. And ahead - December 25 (Catholic and Protestant Christmas), on this day, I know, the Germans do not shoot, they drink hard, they are allowed. Observers don't hold back either. Vigilance blunted.

Odessa robbers spotted one ambush machine gun that was advanced by the Germans at the beginning of the night. They calculated exactly: when the machine gunners would appear, when they would change. Where are the flares coming from? pillbox fire system and bunkers.

They came to me at the CP, they report, and how! Not every commander will set out the disposition for capture in this way.

"language".

- Comrade battalion commander, we spotted one of their secrets. But let's go in the afternoon. At night they watch, a rocket - and we are finished. What are you guys doing during the day? I wonder. - We will cross the Volkhov just before sunset. Well, 500 meters is not that far for young eyes. "Allow us, six of the Krestyaninov commander, to cross the Volkhov before dark!" And take Fritz from an ambush!

The guys insist: we'll steal the Fritz, and that's it! This is something new. To go at sunset, when the enemy deigns to have dinner, on Christmas having taken a decent dose of the table. That's the calculation. But on the left rises a brick chimney of a

power plant up to fifty meters high. And there is an enemy NP. The entire defense is completely studded with firing, machine-gun points, looking at the Volkhov from the embrasures ... I gathered my headquarters. We advise.

Kalachev, Lobanov, deputy drill officer Kukin,

company commander Krestyaninov. Proskurin (authorized by a special department. - Yu. R.) was not there. Odessans insist. They go to their deaths to "deserve the trust of the people"!

We knew that the thieves would not run away to the Germans. They won't let them steal anyway...

And we agreed. Six

scouts with commander Krestyaninov in camouflage suits, throwing, sometimes in a plastunsky style, sometimes skidding, where, bending over, running, passed the Volkhov ice and managed to lie down around the trench - a machine-gun

ambush of the Germans. The darkness thickened. On the other side, silence. The Germans hung up several rockets. And suddenly we hear the muffled explosion of an F-1 grenade. A few minutes later, scouts appeared, carrying a German non-commissioned officer, slightly wounded in

the thigh. As the inhabitants of Odessa told, a German outfit appeared in a minute, three with a machine gun. And then, among the thieves, one, completely inexperienced, pulled out a ring from a grenade - efki. And keeps. But the hand is tired. Where to throw? He threw it at a German walking behind him, killing two. And the eldest, the machine gunner, was seized. While dragged, the Germans were silent. Already dragged, and then the artillery will burst. The entire defense of the battalion was covered, every three or four meters a shell or mine is laid down. They discovered that a non-commissioned officer had been stolen from the post, they wanted to destroy the "language" with us. They had a non-commissioned officer - this was a figure, not like we have a senior sergeant. All six thieves in the dugout lay down on the German,

if only he would remain alive. Thieves need freedom ... It worked out. We are at the command post of the battalion. I call the officer on duty at the division headquarters. I demand Olkhovsky (division commander. - Yu. R.),

who deigns to rest! They picked him up and he's at the pipe. - Comrade Zero-one, we have fulfilled Artyushenko's order: the "tongue" has been taken

- What language"? the Colonel did not understand. - A

German, a non-commissioned officer, has

been taken by ours! - Come on, bring it here! Run! - overjoyed cried Pyotr Ivanovich, finally waking up from sleep.

Having loaded the "jewel" on a sled, the scouts and Krestyaninov took the "language" straight to the division headquarters. Olkhovsky personally presented Krestyaninov with the Order of the Red Banner, and the rest with the Red Star! Like this

penalty boxes! That's the bear cubs! Wiped the nose of our entire army and the Volkhov front!

Nowhere in the historical literature is this case marked. I am the first to write about it.

(S. 158–162.)

As you can see, with skillful use, the penalty box was capable of serious military affairs. Often they found themselves at the forefront of the main attack, they fell to the lot of the initiation of major operations, although in themselves they solved a relatively local problem.

E. A. Golbraikh:

My comrade Lazar Belkin fought in one of these battalions, which laid the foundation for the Iasi-Kishinev operation with their brilliant attack. On the day of the attack, they were given 200 (!) grams of vodka, brought to the front line directly in barrels, given half a pack of shag, and the order was read out: at five o'clock in the morning, after a volley of Katyushas, the battalion goes on the attack. At five o'clock everyone was ready. Silence. Quiet at six o'clock. At seven in the morning they announced that the offensive was cancelled. The disillusioned soldiers dispersed along the trench. Three hours later, a new order - the offensive at exactly ten. And no "Katyushas"! At ten o'clock the battalion went on the attack in complete silence. Without shouting "Hurrah!" But it was not a simple battalion, but a penal battalion. Captured three rows of trenches. German six-barreled mortars turned towards the enemy and fired a volley. Towards Lazar, a German officer ran to the machine gun, lay down behind the machine gun ... Point blank! And here happiness is a misfire. The tape is skewed or something. The officer started to run. Late. Lazar's grenade was already flying...

The enemy had the impression that the main blow was being dealt here. The Germans began to hastily throw equipment and reinforcements. Until late in the evening the battalion fought off attacks, and by nightfall the remnants of the battalion

were forced to return to their original positions. Of almost a thousand people alive, on their feet, one hundred and thirty remained. Most of the participants in the attack were wounded, about a third died.

V. G. Sorokin:

In May 1944 I arrived in the 38th Army and took over the battalion. We changed the cavalry regiment, very shabby. On the phone I received the task - to take the height. The next night he took the height, for which he received the Order of Alexander Nevsky from the army commander K.S.

Moskalenko. I went with the battalion all over Poland, half of Germany and Czechoslovakia. There was a meeting with the Americans. I can firmly say: the penalty box was thrown into the most difficult a

N. I. Smirnov:

In 1943, a major operation was being prepared to cross the Vistula. To conduct reconnaissance in force, it was decided to assemble a reinforced company of two hundred people, including my platoon. The penitentiaries were given the task of taking the "language". The sappers removed the mines, and after a five-minute artillery preparation, we went into battle. Fear, of course, I suffered, but pulled myself together and led his attack. They burst into the trenches, let's beat the German, then they twisted one corporal and, as planned, back. When the Germans came to their senses a little, they began to "water" us from all sides, to surround us. I had to go through. Of the two hundred fighters, about forty people remained alive then, and then crippled and wounded. I was just lucky, I still think about how it was possible to get out of such a massacre alive and unharmed. And then the general offensive began: my penal company participated in the liberation of Warsaw, Berlin, on the Elbe we met with the Americans.

The stories of the front-line soldiers contain an important emphasis: although the legal status of the variable fighters in penal battalions and companies was the same, the combat capabilities of these two varieties of penal units turned out to be incomparable. No wonder: after all, professional military, career officers fought in the penal battalions.

Thoughtful, enterprising military leaders took into account the special combat capabilities of the penal battalions, which arose from the professionalism of regular officers who replenished the penal battalions. Let people wear shoulder straps of privates, but combat experience, skill, high responsibility for the assigned work remained with them.

The author of the book "Penalty Shot, or How an Officer's Penal Battalion Reached Berlin" A.V. Pylytsyn gives a lot of examples on this score. Among the fighters were artillerymen, tankers, even pilots, so it was not difficult for them to deal with the weapons and equipment of the enemy. So, during a raid on the German rear on Rogachev, the captured guns, having previously killed their servants, turned in the direction of noticeable concentrations of enemy troops and warehouses. Here, the penalty box ran out of ammunition for 82-mm mortars. Then well-trained mortarmen took advantage of captured 81-mm mines, quickly changing the firing table. In another case, former tankers quickly opened fire from a self-propelled gun abandoned by the Germans. And to military prowess were added firmness of spirit, and a special desire to rehabilitate. It is this feature of the personnel of the penal battalions that is noticed in the

story of Vyacheslav Kondratiev "Meetings on Sretenka". By the way, this is one of the rare works of Soviet literature, in the center of which is the fate of an ordinary penal battalion fighter. The penitentiaries were ordered to take the village, which ordinary units

unsuccessfully stormed for two months with heavy losses. A few night hours before the attack, five of them remained in the dugout: the main character, senior lieutenant Vladimir Kanaev, the commander of a reconnaissance platoon, the elderly lieutenant colonel Chernov, the "intelligent captain" Shirshov, the chief of staff of the battalion, the commander of the rifle platoon, the "young lieutenant" Vadim, and senior lieutenant Genka Atlasov. All, of course, former officers, former

commanders and chiefs, and now penal privates. And so to them, his comrades in misfortune, Shirshov suggests that they think about how to act in tomorrow's battle in order to complete the task and receive forgiveness. Genka's caustic remark: "We are privates now! Our business is calf - wherever they drive, there and graze. Rifle in hand - and at-two! You need to wean yourself from the pencil, captain," he ignored: "After all, a whole officer battalion! It's worth something!" Shirshov,

recalling how he solved a similar problem in his battalion, proposes to fundamentally change the attack pattern: "By the end of the night, bring the battalion to its original positions and, while it's dark, crawl as far as possible, and then attack, moreover, silently, without any "cheers." "And without any jumps. To run the rest of the field on the move in spite of any fire ... "He infects with his confidence in the success of the inhabitants of the dugout, and then the commander of the penal battalion who came to them" at the light ". With sparing

colors, but very expressively, the writer painted how the penalty box first crawled, and then, when red threads of tracer machine-gun bursts swept over them,

"without any command, as one, they got up from the ground and ran ... At first they ran in silence, then someone swore, and then others ... The Germans increased the fire. The entire German frontline was lit up with the lights of shots, but the roar of obscene screams, thickly hanging over the field and blocking, overpowering machine-gun delirium, made it clear to the Germans which unit was rushing at them, and the fire began to fade, and the mines, flying over, burst already behind the battalion. Volodya saw how the Germans began to leave their positions - screaming, with torn mouths and bloodshot eyes, the penalists approached their trenches ... The Germans ran out half-dressed, fired back, but the penalists could no longer be stopped ... "

Noting some special features in the actions of the penalty boxers, the front-line soldiers themselves at the same time do not agree with the opposition of penalty units to ordinary line ones.

E. A. Golbraikh:

Do not rush to write me down as a hero (the author of the memoirs himself petitioned for the appointment of him as deputy commander of a penal company. - Yu. R.) I am not a brave man. Quite the opposite. But I had already fought in the infantry and knew that there was no big difference between ordinary rifle companies and penal ones. Yes, penal companies are assigned to reconnaissance in force, to break through the enemy's defenses, or stand in the way of his advance. Aren't ordinary rifle battalions assigned? It was in an ordinary rifle battalion of an ordinary rifle regiment, assigned to reconnaissance in battle, that I was supposed to die. And when the consciousness enveloped in black despair faded away, my friend Sasha Kislichko saved me, who died the next minute. And all these years I have been painfully thinking: if he had not come to save me, would Sasha have remained alive?

Military archives have preserved many details of those collisions that unfolded on the battlefields with the participation of penalty boxers. But not all funds, even today, 60 years after the Victory, are open to researchers, and this does not allow achieving a genuine breakthrough in covering the combat activities of penal units. But they, like the army as a whole, have come a long way from the Volga to the Oder and the Elbe. Only in the last few years have they

begun to write, however, very sparingly, for example, about the participation of penalty boxers in the battle for Leningrad. According to St. Petersburg authors, four penal battalions on the Leningrad front, two battalions on the Volkhov front, one on the Karelian front, and two on the North-Western front took part in it at different times. There were many more penalty companies. On the territory of only one Mginsky (now Kirovsky) district of the Leningrad region, 43 penal companies and battalions fought.

In January 1943, during Operation Iskra to break through the enemy blockade, one penal company was thrown across the Neva to the 8th hydroelectric power station, which the Germans turned into a powerful fortress. Another penal company was advancing from the so-called Nevsky Piglet - a bridgehead on the

bank of the Neva near Moscow Dubrovka. And their contribution is in breaking the blockade. Since

the end of September 1943, the penalty box also took part in heavy fighting on the Sinyavinsky Heights. Regardless of the losses, they were thrown into the thick of it without artillery and air support. On September 28, the 163rd and 320th regiments of the 11th Infantry Division received the task of building on the success of three penal companies to seize the highway to Sinyavino. The next day, the 160th separate penal company, attached to the 320th regiment, received an order to capture the enemy's trench. When the company advanced to its initial positions, the enemy discovered its movement and opened heavy fire. The company lost up to half of its

composition, however, continued to carry out the order. Coming to the front line of defense in front of the bend in the road to Sinyavino, after undermining high-explosive flamethrowers, the penalists went on the attack. A grenade battle began at the first line of enemy trenches. The Germans opened fire from all types of weapons on pre-shot cut-off positions. The penal company first lay down, and after an hour of battle, retreated to the starting line.

On September 30, the remnants of a penal company, together with submachine gunners of the 11th division, a few hundred meters from yesterday's battlefield, tried to restore lost positions on the road through Sinyavino. However, they were unsuccessful again: the enemy opened heavy fire and counterattacked with infantry supported by tanks. A week later, on October 5, two penal companies again participated in the battle to seize the road through Sinyavino and again without artillery preparation. The penitentiaries managed to break into the German trenches and start a fight, but the main forces were again covered by enemy fire. Another attack was again unsuccessful. The task was not completed.

Huge losses were suffered: on October 5 alone, the 160th and 267th penal companies lost 131 people killed and wounded. The commander of the 67th Army, Lieutenant General [M.P.](#)

The episodes of the combat activity of the 9th Special Operations Brigade of the 1st Ukrainian Front attract attention. In May - June 1944, a group of 141 penalized men, led by the battalion commander of the guard, lieutenant colonel

Lysenko, acted in the interests of the 410th Infantry Regiment of the 81st Infantry Division of the 3rd Guards Army. Four night searches were independently carried out, two "tongues" were taken, two enemy groups totaling 140 people were defeated. Own losses amounted to 22 killed and 34 wounded. From 7 to 17 July 1944, 245 people from the same OSHB

under the command of Guards Captain I. A. Poluektov supported the actions of the 168th Infantry Regiment of the 24th Samara-Ulyanovsk Iron Rifle Division. The character of the tasks assigned to the penalists and the fierceness of the fighting can be judged by the combat characteristic of the major general, F. A. Prokhorov. Here is an excerpt from it:

approved

division commander

“Having received a combat order for forceful reconnaissance in force, on the night of July 7, 1944, advancing to the starting line, the company began to operate in battle with the support of machine-gun artillery fire with the task of advancing 400–600 meters. They occupied an advantageous line in battle and, by order of the command, entrenched themselves. As a result, up to an enemy infantry platoon, a bunker were destroyed, two enemy light machine guns were destroyed by fire and grenades. The officers and rank and file acted courageously, showing courage.

(only let the word “company” not mislead the reader: in reconnaissance actually involved 27 penalty boxers).

It is natural that the entire personnel participating in these battles, was presented for parole.

In June 1944, another group of 9th Special Operations Brigade of 225 soldiers (commanded by Senior Lieutenant E.P. Bazdyrev) advanced in combat formations of the 606th Infantry Regiment of the 317th Infantry Division of the 18th Army. Three lines of enemy defense were broken through and taken, two artillery and three machine-gun points were suppressed, up to 500 were destroyed, 25 enemy soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. A group of 100 penalists

also acted boldly, assertively, ensuring the advancement of two rifle regiments at

Khlebichin Lesny (now Ivano-Frankivsk region of Ukraine). Our fighters broke through the heavily fortified German defenses, reinforced with barbed wire and minefields, and were able to gain a foothold on the outskirts of the settlement. In the battle, which several times turned into hand-to-hand combat, up to 400 Nazis were killed and wounded, 35 were taken prisoner, rich trophies were captured[118] .

A vivid picture of the participation of penal fighters in one of the episodes on the eve of the Belarusian strategic operation was given by the Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel-General V.M. shock army of the 1st Belorussian Front. To the credit of the author, he is one of the few memoirist generals who was not afraid not only to mention the penalists in his memoirs, but also to pay tribute to their contribution to the overall success of the troops. For the assault on the height with a mark of 228.4 (Zaozernaya), which, dominating the surrounding area, was of great tactical value, the necessary forces were allocated.

The commander of the 79th Rifle Corps, General S.N. Perevertkin, additionally sent two penal companies. The divisional commander personally met them, listened to the report of the company commanders, Captain N. Z. Korolev and senior lieutenant G. S. Reshetnyak, talked with the soldiers, expressing confidence that they remained trustworthy Soviet people in the penal company.

Two days before the assault on the height, a “dress rehearsal” for the upcoming battle took place. According to the division commander, everything went well, there was complete confidence in success. The soldiers were given a day recreation.

And then the morning of June 22 came. Memorable number! Exactly three years separated our troops from the moment when the Nazi troops crossed the Soviet border like a robber, now the irreversible course of the war led the Red Army to the west. After intensive

artillery preparation, during which the sappers made passages in the minefield and barbed wire, the first to rush forward were the penalty box.

"Both companies rose at the same time," the memoirist recalled.
- The soldiers slipped through the ford channel without stopping.
Artillery transferred fire to the second enemy trench. Direct-fire guns
hit on the flanks, in the intervals between the battle formations of the
enemy, on
live firing points.

A fairly dense line of soldiers ran up the gentle slope. Here the
fighters began to throw grenades. A cheer erupts, and figures in
protective tunics disappear into the trench. "Well done!" I mentally
admire. After all, only eleven minutes had passed since the signal.
Hand-to-hand combat breaks out. The Nazis can not stand it, they
run. Our soldiers rush into the depths of the enemy defenses. Through
the

stereo tube, I can see the tall figure of Melnikov, at the head of a
platoon

pursuing the Nazis. This is the same former cadet that I paid
attention to when I got acquainted with the penalty box ... Today, as
soon as a series of red rockets soared into the sky, Melnikov was the
first to jump out of the trench and cross the ford, now he is the first to
run to the second enemy trench. I watch him, and I want him to
survive, to stay alive.

Here Melnikov tore a grenade from his belt, inserted a fuse into
it on the move and, almost without bending down, threw it. The
grenades of the platoon fighters followed. "Ur-r-r-a-a!" - the unit burst
into the trench. I saw how Melnikov was the first to jump into it ... Then
I lost sight of him. The battle was all over the slope. The enemy,

caught unawares, has so far offered no serious resistance. Our small
group broke out onto the crest of Zaozernaya from the right flank. A
machine gun rumbled from there, and several people fell. The enemy
began to recover, and in some places to fight back. His resistance
gradually increased. However, the attackers continued to move
forward quite quickly ...

- You to the phone, - the adjutant handed me the phone

Anatoly Kurbatov. Bass came from it:

Captain Korolev reports. He took seventeen prisoners. All from the 15th SS division. What to do with them? - Send it to me. - I'm listening! The company went over

the ridge. We are fighting

on the reverse slope. The enemy brings into battle small units with tanks.

- Try to knock them over. Soon Senior Lieutenant Reshetnyak called. He also said that he was moving forward

successfully, but was already dealing with

an organized rebuff. I understood that the Nazis, having recovered from the surprise, were beginning to commit their main forces into battle in order to first stop the offensive, and then go on a counterattack and push us back to the starting line ... We had to urgently gain a foothold. Only then did we have the prospect of holding the height of 228.4. I ordered all the forces of artillery and mortars to suppress the flanking machine guns and direct fire guns, to fire on the nameless

skyscrapers that were located half a kilometer to the west and south of Zaozernaya, to prevent counterattacks from the right flank, to bring the 3rd battalion of the 674th regiment into battle.

And from behind Zaozernaya came the ever-increasing roar of battle .

Results completed fighting spectacular. The turned out to be division captured an important position, now it "saw" 10–15 kilometers further, could more advantageously position artillery and especially direct fire guns, and received good starting lines for the army's offensive, which was about to begin. The enemy suffered significant losses, leaving up to two thousand soldiers and about fifty tanks on the battlefield. The number of prisoners approached four hundred.

But, General V. M. Shatilov frankly writes, even in the division killed a lot of people.

"The damage was especially great in the penal companies - few of them survived."

Their word, albeit not very loud, the penal units said at the final stage of the war. One must have a good idea of the attitude with which the soldiers crossed the state border and walked on foreign land, knowing what kind of desert was left after the skating rink of war on their native land.

M. G. Klyuchko:

What I remember was when they reached the border of Prussia, a large poster with the words: "Soldier, you are the judge!" - and the signature: "Ilya Ehrenburg." I don't think any explanation is needed here. Our company, having been reinforced with tanks with

special equipment for making passages in minefields, was thrown to break through an impregnable, according to the Germans, defense in depth. As you know, she was overcome. After that, we went through the whole of Prussia - we did not see a single civilian. True, once, when they had already taken Koenigsberg, I remember we were marching through some village. And a German woman came out of the yard with a bucket. Believe it or not, but the whole company - there were about 40 of us - stopped. They looked at her as something impossible. There should not have been living Germans! Today it may seem wild, but at that time many had their own scores with the Germans: someone's family died, someone from their relatives was taken to Germany. And this anger was so

strong that we could really, in one breath, not only reach Berlin, but if necessary, even France. It was just pure hatred. Moreover, when passing through the same Prussia, we met our compatriots, who were taken by force to

work in Germany, released from concentration camps
prisoners.

One episode I remember for the rest of my life. There is a group of people in concentration camp clothes. It turned out they were French. It is winter outside, and they are in wooden blocks on their bare feet. And on the cobblestones there is only sound: clatter, clatter, clatter ... And they go to the north, not to the west. We tried to explain to them that France is on the other side. And they look at us with a misty look and continue to walk. Terrible sight...

Another former penalty box recalls the battles in East Prussia.

N. Tarasenko:

We were given weapons, set the task: to cross the river, go to the rear of the Germans and quickly knock them out of the fortified point. It was March 1945. The river,

fortunately, turned out to be shallow, the bottom was not silty. From the fog, having overcome its ford, they broke into the shore and, with the traditional penal battalion lexicon, fell upon the enemy pillboxes. The Germans did not expect such impudence. With cries of "Shtrafiren! Shtrafiren!" fled in disorder. They probably knew that the penalty box did not take prisoners. In the course of the battle, two of

my comrades and I found ourselves on the left flank of the battalion's chain and, with our intense fire, ensured a successful attack. The battle was over for us, the success of the battalion was picked up and developed by the infantry units.

In the Vistula-Oder operation, the 123rd separate penal company, commanded by Captain Z. M. Buniyatov, distinguished himself. Ziya Musaevich later recalled:

"I was entrusted with an extremely dangerous task: to overcome the enemy's triple line of defense and get out

deep in the rear. We had to take a mined bridge 80 meters long across the Pilica River, while keeping the bridge intact, as military equipment had to pass through it. And we accomplished this task, but at what cost! In this battle, out of 670 fighters, 47 survived. How many I buried then, how many letters I wrote to their relatives! All the survivors were awarded military orders. And on February 27, 1945, I was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union"[120] .

Penal boxes also participated in the battle for Berlin. The fighting that ended the war was especially brutal. Its authorities divided the fascist capital into a dozen fortified areas, each of which was defended by up to 15 thousand people. The Germans actively used underground structures built specifically for defensive battles.

The Soviet troops had to literally gnaw through the echeloned defense. Starting from April 24, 1945, powerful "destruction groups", created by order of the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, Marshal G.K. Zhukov, intensive fire from all types of artillery subjected streets, intersections, buildings to continuous processing. Following the fire, assault units, made up of representatives of various branches of the armed forces, fought in their composition and penalized. So, in the 3rd shock army (commander - Colonel-General V. I. Kuznetsov), a procedure was established in accordance with which the forward sections of the assault groups (8-10 people each) were formed from penalized soldiers and military personnel released from German captivity . They also had the main burden of smoking out the defenders from various kinds of fortifications.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

... When we entered the Reichstag, its walls, columns and other architectural details, partially destroyed, sooty, just two days after the capture of the Reichstag were already painted both short and lengthy

autographs of Soviet soldiers, even at a height accessible only to a gigantic person. And they were written with chalk, and fragments of bricks, and burnt firebrands.

Petya Zagumennikov and I (he returned to the battalion the day before) dragged some fragments of concrete and burnt boxes against the wall, I climbed on them, and Rita (the wife of A. V. Pyltsyn, who fought next to him. - Yu. R.) and Peter supported me from both sides so that he would not fall down. And with some kind of charred stick he deduced: "Alexander and Margarita Pyltsyn. Far East - Leningrad - Berlin. And a flourish for two.

(S. 240.)

So the soldiers of the penal units had a chance to sign on the Reichstag.

Chapter

7

Heavy, stubborn battles were accompanied by heavy losses. By order of I.V. Stalin, penal units were placed on the most difficult sectors of the front, and they were entrusted with the most difficult combat missions. As a result, they lost a lot of people. For example, in the same 1944, the total losses of personnel (killed, dead, wounded and sick) of all penal formations for the year (on an accrual basis) amounted to 170,298 permanent staff (command staff) and penalized. The average monthly losses amounted to 14,191 people (variable composition - 10,506 people, permanent - 3685 people), or 52% of their average monthly number (27,326 people). This is 3-6 times more than the total average monthly losses of personnel in conventional troops in the same offensive [121] operations in 1944. But here, too, everything is not so simple. Here is a — .

typical opinion of a front-line soldier A.D. Gutman, who went through the war not in penal units, but in ordinary line units and ended it as a battalion commander of the 996th rifle regiment of the 286th rifle division:

“For my battalion, every battle ... was a battle of penalty boxers. Every day ... go to the German machine guns on the corpses of their comrades. And every day I had to be the first to climb the parapet and lead people behind me into [122] the attack. — .

Researcher Yu. G. Veremeev, while agreeing that the penalty boxers were indeed thrown into the hottest sectors of the front, nevertheless also believes that in the attack an ordinary rifle company suffered almost the same losses as a penal company. You can agree or disagree with him, but you can't refuse the logic of his reasoning: “For ordinary companies, these losses are also distributed over periods of defense (when a company could not lose a single person in a day, a week), and

for offensive periods. And penal companies were not put on the defensive. They were waiting for an attack in the rear, that is, they did not suffer losses at all at that time. As a result of the loss of penalized and ordinary rifle companies, battalions during attacking actions often turned out to be —

comparable[123] . This, by the way, is another argument in favor of the assertion that penal units were a rather humane alternative (of course, in the harsh conditions of the war) to execution for war crimes.

Many writers on this topic today do not see this alternative, unambiguously assessing Order 227 as a manifestation of the extreme cruelty of the Stalinist regime. Often they deviate from what experts call the principle of historicism, in other words, they judge that time from the position of today. But is it possible to ignore the many faces of the then political regime, the nature of the relationship between the government and the people, the peculiarities of the legislation of the 40s, the specifics of wartime, the laws and orders of which are always more severe in any country, no matter - totalitarian or democratic, is it possible, finally, not to take into account the specific situation that developed in the summer of 1942 on the Soviet-German front. The

unscrupulousness of such authors is also manifested in the fact that all those who have fallen into the number of fines are declared in bulk to be innocent victims, they condemn the authorities for the allegedly excessive cruelty shown to them, they try to convince them that they were driven into penal companies and battalions for almost any offense, just to give in the order of the command is more "cannon fodder". It happens that former penitentiaries come to their aid in this, telling all sorts of fables out of anger at the Soviet regime that has not yet passed or out of a desire to become famous, to play along with the journalists they interview.

This kind of reasoning is not new today. They go hand in hand with general accusations against both the political regime as a whole and the military command of cruelty, inability to wage war in a modern way, in an effort to compensate for such inability with immeasurable sacrifices. We hope that the facts presented in the book will allow the reader to understand the problem on their own, to separate the grains of truth from the chaff of fiction.

The arguments of the authors condemned by us are not only far from reality, but also inhumane, although these people are trying to look like defenders of the penalty box. The Stalinist regime was already distinguished by its cruelty, there were more than enough unnecessary victims, why would it be fiction to increase their number even more?

And the Soviet soldiers really had a hard time. "51 people were killed and died from wounds, 63 were wounded," the company commander of the 9th Special Operations Brigade, Senior Lieutenant Bazdyrev, reported after the battle described above. In other words, out of 225 people, 114, that is, half, were out of action. And that's just in a few days. 66 variables were killed and wounded out of 110 subordinates of Senior Lieutenant Runikin during the assault and holding of the Bezymyannaya height (Gorokhovskiy district of the Volyn region). Of the 170 people of the company of senior lieutenant Kuzmin who took the fight, 58 people were wounded, 14 were killed in battle, 4 died of wounds in the hospital[124] .

The 357th separate army penal company, in which N.P. Shelepugin served, took part in many battles. And all of them were distinguished by special cruelty and bloodshed. The veteran often remembers the episode during the liberation of Belarus. The company broke through the defenses in the offensive zone of the rifle division, which was operating in the direction of the main attack. At the cost of heavy losses, she completed the task, crossed the Sozh River on the move and captured a small bridgehead. For three days and three nights, she held a piece of land, repulsing numerous attacks of the Nazis. About thirty people remained in the ranks. Over a hundred penalty boxers were killed, about three hundred wounded. But the bridgehead was defended. The troops who crossed then used it to develop a further offensive[125] . From—

August 1 to December 30, 1942, in the 8th OSHB of the Stalingrad (Don) Front, out of 177 people sent there by order of "cowardice", and 154 - by court order, from August 1 to December 30, 1942, 71 variables were killed and 138 were injured. The battalion suffered very heavy losses in the battles on the Kursk Bulge: a total of 143 people were killed and 375 were injured[126] .

These proportions, as documents testify and recall veterans, rarely changed in the direction of reducing losses.

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

Our company was enough for one or two, rarely three serious battles. Practically no one stayed in the ranks for more than a month during offensive battles.

M. G. Klyuchko:

How many people did the company lose after each battle? I can not tell. I did not know how many personnel entered the battle and how many left it. The fighting went on continuously. Behind the first line of the front was the second. While one makes up for losses, the other continues the battle. And so constantly. Frontier abroad. I clearly remember the battles near Brest. They took skyscrapers. So there from the company almost no one was left alive. I was wounded and shell-shocked. My parents received notice of my death. By the way, after one of the battles, a funeral was also sent to me near Rostov ...

A. V. Belyaev:

Losses, as far as I remember, were great. Approximately 50-70%.

G. M. Dubinin:

They went in a chain, 8-10 steps apart, quietly, without shouting. The German did not fire. How long, I don't know. Suddenly a mine burst. The chain is stuck. Moans, screams of those who exploded, curses against our sappers for not doing everything right, removing mines. And

then the Germans began shelling, and, of course, new losses. It turned out, you can't go back - they'll kill their own, go ahead

there is also no possibility ... I'll say from memory that after that day half of the personnel were written off (about 70 people).

I. I. Korzhik:

But weren't the felons suicide bombers? I think yes! When out of 1200 people in the battalion 48 remained in the ranks - is that not enough?.. It was a great happiness to survive the penalty box.

As you can see, many tend to consider penalty boxers doomed to inevitable death. But since they have the opportunity to express themselves, it means that their own fate corrects this point of view. There are more striking examples. So, the Red Army soldier F.V. Golovachev fell into the penal company three times, but nevertheless survived [127] On the 2nd Ukrainian and 2nd - Baltic fronts, as part of the penal companies, he twice washed away the guilt with blood repeatedly mentioned on the pages of this book N I. Saprygin, He was awarded the Order of Glory 3rd degree there (he told the author of this book in detail about his odyssey already in the 90s). Let us also recall A. V. Pyltsyn, who for a year and a half - from December 1943 to May 1945 - won the 8th OSHB as a permanent member.

Of course, not everyone was lucky to survive in that fierce battle with fascism. The victory came at a high cost. Blessed memory to those who did not live ... Frankly

speaking, some of the losses could have been, if not avoided, then reduced. Alas, other military commanders, having received at their disposal penitentiaries, saw them only as criminals and did not consider it necessary to protect them as manpower. Sometimes they simply plugged holes, throwing them into battle, without ensuring that passages were made in mine-explosive barriers, leaving them without fire cover or support. Such bosses reasoned simply: since

the fines are supposed to wash away the guilt with blood, let them wash it off and rely only on themselves. Their own indiscipline in organizing artillery preparation or unwillingness to support the attacking actions of the penalty boxers with fire, they attributed to the need

corrections of the variable composition of penal formations in the most difficult conditions.

It is likely that Viktor Astafiev recalled such cases when the lines of his harsh, cruel truthful, so many times cursed by critics novel "Cursed and Killed" were laid down on paper:

"The dust of the earth and the smoke had just settled down, after the first wave of bombers on the strip of the coast, along the Cherevinka River and along the ravines, the penal company dispersed, trampled, shook and baggy went on the attack.

Without shouting "Hurrah!", without prodding, spurring himself and his closest comrade with only shrill swearing, at first it seems to be harmonious, heap, but gradually disconnecting from everything in the world. Left alone with death, emitting to absolutely no one, and to the attacker himself, too, unknown, in the womb before he himself originated a cry, they screamed, poured out, not hearing themselves and not understanding where they were going, and what they were yelling, and how much they still had to go - to the edge of this earth or to some other end - after all, everything in the world must come to an end, even those cursed by God, beings rejected by people cannot go forever with a roar into the fire. They stumbled, fell, wanted and could not hide behind anything, curl up in a funnel that was invitingly open with a dark mouth. The enemy trenches were thrashed at the Shuriks. As soon as they lingered, lie down, the machine guns of the detachment spurred on from behind. Forward, only forward, to the muzzles of machine-gun fires, to spitting mortars, forward, to fiery hell, to hell - there is no place for them on the earth itself - their landslide, disastrous path is only there, over

there, to the reddish brows of freshly dug trenches. A man came up with thousands of ways to forget and forget about death, but, cunningly, deceiving his neighbor, robbing him, torturing him, he himself, unfortunate, brought these minutes closer, prepared this meeting place with death, quietly hoping that it was abo

blow him away, because he is so small and his sins are also small, and if he receives life to atone for these sins, he will respect human laws, human brotherhood. But from here, from this disastrous place, from under fire and bullets, it's too far to the brotherhood, you can't get it, you can't pray for mercy, because there's no one to pray to, and they don't know how. Forward, forward to the cloudy floating, red glowing earthen ramparts - there with unfading candles, dancing and spitting flames in the face - the path to the underworld is marked, and if so, then to God, to the mother, to all the baptist saints, a-a-a-o-o-o-o - i-i-i-i-i-i-i-s s-s-s-for-a-a - doo-doo-doo-doo ... and more, and something else, spewed out by a wet, dirty hole in the mouth, unknown to any animal, just to cough up the bitter, sour ash left from itself, burned into dust, even fear, and that burned out or failed, settled inside, into the intestines, into heart with its last breath. It, the heart, which had become everything in the human body, embracing everything in it, was still moving and moving, carrying it somewhere. All the crushing evil, madness and fear, muffled by the roar and obscenities, collapsibly dirty, accursed obscenities that replaced words, reason, memory, drive a person to no one knows where, and only the heart, a small and innocent, honestly working human heart, still hears, still listens to life, it is still capable of hurting and suffering, has not yet been torn, has not burst, it still contains the whole world, all its storms and upheavals - what a wonderful, what a mighty, what a necessary instrument the Lord has put into man!

The position of those military commanders who recklessly sacrificed penalty boxes was not only cynical, but also illegal: after all, penal units were intended not only to atone for the guilty, but also to solve specific combat missions. In this sense, penal formations did not fundamentally differ from ordinary linear units. Nobody canceled the combat charter in relation to them, and all types of support had to be carried out in full. But

this did not always happen, thus the successful solution of a combat mission was sacrificed to a falsely understood educational moment.

V. V. Karpov:

The attacks were like this. For the first time, 196 people went, and only 8 returned. That's what the meat grinder was like. Silly, without proper artillery support. But this is the first time. Then it was corrected.

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

The company commander set the task simply: "Our troops recently left the village of Berezovka, which is one and a half to two kilometers from here. We've been ordered to take it by storm. To do this, you need to get as close as possible and rush at the Germans, knock them out of the village. The first platoon of Lieutenant Gudoshnikov is moving to the right flank, the second - Lieutenant Goloshchapov - will go to his left, and you, Ganzha, with your platoon will support them from behind if they start to drift. All clear?" There

were more than enough ambiguities for me. After all, we need to at least roughly know the strength of the enemy, who supports us, who is on the right, who is on the left of us? Then I thought: the combat mission was set for the penalty box, here, apparently, there were no rules.

P. D. Barabolya:

But the thoughtless, dismissive attitude towards people could not be justified by anything. This happened near Starodubovka.

The Germans fortified the village thoroughly. They blocked all approaches to their front line with multi-layered fire, densely dotted with anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. The slightest suspicion of an attack on our part caused the Germans to take the most decisive action. It was quite obvious even to a person who was not very experienced in military affairs that it was simply unthinkable to take possession of such a heavily fortified stronghold without its comprehensive preliminary "processing", throwing people at it was real madness. Nevertheless, we received an order: "Take Starodubovka." It was an unusually cold

winter for the area. All around, as far as the eye could see, there was deep snow, and this created an additional difficulty, fettered the maneuver. The Germans let us in about two hundred meters and hit us with all their guns. The wounded and dead immediately appeared, and we only just moved from our "familiar" places. A new attempt to move forward cost several more human lives. There would have been an end to the inappropriate undertaking - an attack without thorough artillery preparation. But we were pushed forward again and again. In one of these senseless throws, mortar fire covered us, and I only heard Shcherbakov, who was not far from me, gasp (orderly. - Yu. R.). He remained lying on the crimson snow, struck by a fragment on the spot. In that inglorious battle, when, by

the way, I was slightly wounded in the arm, but remained in the ranks, almost a third of the platoon died near Starodubovka, never having mastered it. Many of those who, long ago, in previous battles, with their courage, loyalty to military duty, have earned the right to be rehabilitated even without "first blood", died. The names of these guys come to mind: Blinov, Babenko, Plotnikov, Nikiforov ... Can you name them all! Meanwhile, when the operation "Ring" to encircle and destroy

the 300,000th group of Germans in the Stalingrad region was successfully completed, our troops

they had a sufficient number of various military equipment and weapons, including the famous Katyushas. So there were every opportunity to avoid unnecessary sacrifices. As it was, for example, during the capture of the same village of Elkhi. Then our attack was preceded by a fairly reliable artillery preparation. Dozens of guns and mortars unleashed devastating fire on well-reconnoitered enemy positions. After that, the tanks moved forward, and already in the wake of their tracks, the 610th separate penal rushed to the enemy trenches. The enemy was demoralized and quickly retreated, suffering significant losses. We won the battle with virtually no human casualties.

(S. 361–362.)

I. I. Korzhik:

We were given the task of cutting the roads connecting Narva with Tallinn and reaching the Gulf of Finland. The attack is at dawn. But there was not a single artillery or mortar shot. Even the heavy machine guns were silent. The first hundred meters had to be overcome in open

areas. What a high price we paid for each of them! Only I have changed ten trays. With great difficulty we walked twelve kilometers in deep snow. There were some 100-200 meters left to the road, but the ammunition ran out. We were forced to stop, and then move two kilometers away. For two months we tried to overcome these kilometers again, attacking several times a day. By mid-March, out of 1,200 former officers, forty-eight of us remained in the battalion.

Front-line soldiers know that situations like the above have happened all the time, to the disgrace of senior commanders, and with ordinary units. M. I. Suknev before his appointment as commander

The penal battalion fought as part of the same 225th rifle division, which was temporarily attached to its penal unit, so he knew the people and the situation in the division perfectly. Do we need any additional colors to the picture of the battle of the rifle battalion, which was commanded by his front-line friend Captain G. Gaichenya, he painted!

M. I. Suknev:

In the early days of October, while it was still warm, the 1st battalion of Gaichen was sent to cross the Volkhov and take the Mysovaya height, located not far from the Novgorod suburb of Krechevitsa. It was not a height, but a coastal promontory on the western side of the river. At dawn, without proper artillery preparation, without suppressing the main fire weapons of the enemy, the battalion in boats (in which the frames were covered with canvas) reached the middle of the river and was met by hurricane artillery and machine-gun fire from the Germans. Two-thirds of the battalion landed on the opposite bank, the rest went to the bottom of the Volkhov with boats and machine guns ... It was a shooting, just like during the storming of

Novgorod! The battalion fought for seven days, dying in an unequal battle. They nevertheless broke through to the Podberezye-Novgorod highway, already northwest of the height! But there was no help from either the regiment or the division. They wanted to take this height "at random", which cost the regiment the death of the battalion, its commander Grigory Gaychenya and political officer

Fyodor Kordubailo. What did they think, dying?.. Without reserves, the necessary artillery preparation, they were ordered to take the height with the crossing of the river 600 meters wide. This is madness!

(p. 143)

The trouble is that if such criminal adventures were not avoided in ordinary linear units, then for penal formations, other senior commanders considered such actions almost the norm. AND

it's good if among the commanders of the penal units there were not formalists-performers, but thinking, conscientious people who understood that it was a crime to lead personnel to an unsuppressed enemy defense and, therefore, lose people in vain. The memoirist tells how the same task - to take the height, where a whole battalion

had already fallen in vain, and in the same way - by storm, without having processed the front edge of the enemy defense with artillery, was now set before the penalists - his new

subordinates.

M. I. Suknev:

We occupied the defense center in the village of Slutka, where there was not a single house, hut left, everything was cut with trenches and communication passages, on a high bank against the Mysovaya height, where the 1st battalion of Gaychenya died ... The

command of the division tried to throw our battalion again to capture this height, which we did not need and needed. But then we find out: we have been transferred to the 59th Army of General I. T. Korovnikov, a brilliant military leader! But I [nevertheless] sent forward several Basmachi, who imitated an attack through the Volkhov ice and returned immediately. The Germans crushed the ice into crumbs with shells, but in vain.

The command of the division is silent. Shelf too. It was like swallowing a bitter pill. Of course, I risked my head, but here I was supported by our irreplaceable detective Proskurin. And he, the Chekist, had authority "higher than the people's commissar", on our scale, of course!

(S. 156–158.)

Such commanders, of course, did not so much rely on their own cunning as they tried to competently organize the battle, do everything to fulfill the combat mission and save people.

M. I. Suknev:

We took a position opposite the settlement with the church. The name of the settlement is Georgievsky. We called him George. To the right, a wide bay from Lake Ilmen stretched Veryazh, at least 500 meters wide. By order of the chief of staff of the division, we were supposed to drive the enemy out of Georgievsky, but they did not promise us artillery support! .. We had to overcome 500 meters of a flat snow field! In the evening, I sent out two strong reconnaissance groups with the task of getting as close as possible and breaking into the village. Robbers from Odessa began to move forward in a belligerent way. To the right, along the banks of the Veryazh, are penal officers,

temporary soldiers. And it was necessary for this to happen: as soon as ours got close to the throw, as if beyond Veryazh, in the coastal village of Khramtsovo, occupied by the enemy, several fires broke out. From there, the Fritz prepared to leave. But here, in the light of the glow from the fires, the Germans, having found ours, began to throw up flares and opened machine-gun mortar fire. No loss, but the scouts returned. In the morning, another order from the division and again from the chief of staff, as if the commander had disappeared: "Take George, period!" I call for artillery or mortar support. From there its: take and report! This was a gross violation of the combat regulations - without suppressing machine-gun points, it is impossible to

attack in open areas ... With difficulty, I called the commander of the mortar battery, my friend from the Sverdlovsk school, Nikolai Ananiev, shouting to him: "Support fire on Georgy! I'll move the battalion!" Ananyev muttered something into the phone, and I didn't understand: did he have mines or was he "too short", as always! Dozens of mines exploded in the settlement, but did not hit the bell tower and the wooden church, which was a miscalculation (high-rise buildings were used by the Nazis for observation and firing points. - Yu. R.). Under the cover of Maxim machine guns, which opened a

fire, a battalion on a red rocket rushed forward, to attack! But the explosions of our mines suddenly stopped, and we remained "naked" in the field! Company commanders Krestyaninov and Nikolai Shaturny were wounded! I am sending Nikolai Lobanov there to replace Krestyaninov. A few minutes later I was informed: Lobanov was killed! On the right, in a company of Odessans, there were twenty killed and the same number of wounded! There are losses in the 1st company, officers! I give a green rocket - hang up. Before that, I, having replaced the machine gunner at Maxim, fired at the bell tower, and from there the German machine gun stopped firing. A Fritz was running to the settlement on the left along the trench, I laid him down in a short burst. The only enemy mine,

having arrived from the settlement, exploded in front of me. The result - I was stunned, wounded in the nose and forehead by shrapnel. Her face was covered with blood ... Having applied

bandages, medical instructor Alexandra Lopatkina, black-eyed and courageous not like a woman, called my deputy for the combat unit, Captain Kukin, who was similar to me both in character and appearance. Take the battalion! I don't

see anything, everything goes circles! I breathed to him.

Alexandra immediately took me to the first-aid post, from where I got to the medical battalion located at the headquarters of our 14th corps. At

first, no one noticed the replacement of the battalion commander in the battalion - smoke and explosions. On the same night, on an armored car, Kukin with a group of soldiers boldly and straight rushed to that village, and the Fritz, there were 15 of them, raised their hands in unison. They carried out the order of their command: to hold us until this hour. The enraged penitentiaries did not take anyone prisoner, they pinned everyone with

bayonets. Leaving for the first-aid post, I went for a second into the house occupied by the headquarters of the regiment. Here were the new regiment commander and political

officer. I threw the words to them with anger: - You are observers, not commanders! supported us with artillery?

But they just shrugged. What did they understand, who had not yet sniffed gunpowder? ..

(S. 169–171.)

On the other hand, if the penalty box found itself in such a situation, they did not have much choice. They, of course, sharper than the fighters of the line units, felt the need to fulfill the order of the command, regardless of any circumstances. An additional incentive for their active actions is obvious: in order to count on rehabilitation, one stay at the forefront was not enough for them, they had to actively show self-sacrifice, heroism and atone for guilt, as required by order No. 227, with blood. Whoever accidentally stumbled, committed a crime through an oversight or in a moment of weakness, will strive, despite the

danger, to wash off the stain from himself, to stand as quickly as possible on a par with his former comrades in the military ranks.

P. D. Barabolya:

In this regard, the fate of a boy from the Tambov region, Nikolai Shcherbakov, seems to me typical. We platoons were supposed to have orderlies. Clearly, not in order to clean boots or inflate the samovar. The combat situation required live operational communication with neighbors, a quick response to the evolving situation. To perform such and other, sometimes unpredictable tasks, a person was needed who was brave, quick-witted and reliable in all respects. Shcherbakov - a strong man, a peasant's son, an intelligent anti-tanker - according to my observations, was quite suitable for the role of an orderly. At first, however, he was held back by an important circumstance - he was sentenced, as a deserter, to be shot. But what if, using some "freemen" when executing an order, being out of control over the location of the unit,

will he wave first somewhere in the rear, and then to his native Tambov

region? And his sincere repentance was remembered. "I committed a great stupidity in my youth, comrade commander. I will never forgive myself," Shcherbakov often lamented on those cold November nights when I found myself next to him in the trench. "After the injury, on a visit at home, one sorceress bewitched me, I didn't have the strength and mind to get rid of her spell in time. The month was not in the unit. And now - a deserter, a tower ... But nothing, I will still prove that I can correct

mistakes ... "He proved this repeatedly. He constantly rushed to where the lives of the fighters hung in the balance and where the fire of his anti-tank rifle turned out to be most welcome. With great respect and warmth, I remember Nikolai Shcherbakov also because he twice averted trouble from me - he covered himself when, in the midst of the battle, we fell under the destructive artillery and mortar shelling of the Germans. But the desperate guy did not save himself.

(S. 360.)

According to archival documents, the author managed, though not completely, to trace the fate of one of the penalized men of the 9th OSHB of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Private V.P. Shchennikov. Unfortunately, it is not clear for what reason he ended up in the penal battalion, but many circumstances convince: most likely an absurd accident brought him here from the post of commander of the rifle battalion of the 1052nd rifle regiment of the 301st rifle division of the 5th shock army of the 4th Ukrainian front. The senior lieutenant could not be a coward, a deserter - a participant in the fighting since 1941, awarded four (!) Orders, wounded three times. On the example of such people, the harsh justice of such a measure as being sent to a penal battalion is especially clearly expressed (of course, if in this case there was, say, veiled revenge on the part of a direct superior or something similar). Would it really be better for such a proven fighter to "bend" somewhere on

logging, counting the days until release on prison bunk? No, it's better to look fate in the eye in an open battle. And

Shchennikov does not bend under bullets, does not "pull out" the term in the hope of surviving and somehow waiting out the two months for which he is assigned to the penal battalion. Here are the lines from the combat characteristics of the variable fighter Viktor Pavlovich Shchennikov, prepared by the commander of the guard platoon, Lieutenant Balachan, immediately after the end of the battle: "When attacking a heavily fortified enemy defense line on July 8, 1944 ... being the first number of a light machine gun, he suppressed the enemy's firing point, allowing others to advance. When his second number failed, he took the discs and continued to advance in battle formations ... During the exit from the battlefield, he carried out 2 light machine guns, 2 rifles, 4 machine guns and one wounded squad leader. Worthy of submission to the government award. On the characterization is the resolution of the commander of the guard company, Captain Poluektov: "Comrade. Shchennikov

deserves early rehabilitation." To match Shchennikov was his comrade in the calculation of a penal light machine gun, Private N. S. Korban. Former senior lieutenant, senior adjutant of the rifle battalion of the 1340th rifle regiment of the 234th rifle division of the 4th shock army of the 1st Baltic Front, he, while providing the crew commander with ammunition, managed at the same time to help four wounded [128] in evacuation from the battlefield, took out two light machine guns and a rifle

As having distinguished themselves in battles, both Shchennikov and Korban were presented for early rehabilitation (we note in parentheses: for a not entirely clear reason, the officers who fought on the 4th Ukrainian and 1st Baltic fronts served their sentences in the penal battalion of the

1st Ukrainian Front). Let's say one more thing: the commanding staff of the penal units, as in the army as a whole, led their subordinates not only by the force of an order, a call-to-word, but also by personal example. A native of the Kurgan region, N.V. Privezentsev, being a platoon commander in a penal battalion, received seven wounds in only one battle when breaking the blockade of Leningrad, but did not leave the battlefield. Even the worldly-wise penitentiaries admired the courage of their commander, his every word was the highest measure for them

justice. His fellow countryman M. A. Tropin fought as deputy commander in a penal company. He was also wounded several times [\[129\]](#).

But, as in the army as a whole, the command staff of the penal units was not the same. Some shared the tests equally with subordinates, while others ...

E. A. Golbraikh:

Vladimir Karpov, a well-known writer, Hero of the Soviet Union, who himself took a sip of a penal company, writes that the officers of the penal companies with their penal companies did not go on the attack. Yes and no. If there are experienced commanders from the penalty box, you can not go. And if not, or "run out", you have to go yourself. For the most part, that's exactly what happened. Here is one of many examples. Two deputy company commanders, senior lieutenant Vasily Demyanenko and myself, led the company on the attack. When the task was already almost completed, I was wounded by a shrapnel in the chest. I still remember my first thought at that moment: "Don't fall! So it's easy!" Demyanenko was about thirty paces from me, saw that I staggered and I jumped into the funnel. Ran up: "Where?" Silently I point to a hole in a sheepskin coat; "Drop it!" The whole dialogue is two words. He bandaged me.

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

I always went into battle together with the penalized, often right in battle formations, this gave them more confidence ("the commander is with us"), determination, and to me - hope for success.

P. S. Amosov:

Other commanders reasoned like this: you are atoning for guilt, but why should we suffer? I almost do not remember that I had to ask about something or follow the orders of the commanders. Unfortunately, they are often left behind. I remember only the battalion commander.

G. M. Dubinin:

... After eating, the company commander appeared over the trench and loudly announced the order: "There is a village ahead, we need to take it and gain a foothold on the other side. Whoever comes there will be justified." And from that moment I did not see the officers until they took the village.

V. G. Sorokin:

There were cases when the soldiers did not let me, the battalion commander, go on the attack: "We ourselves, don't go!" It was very warm in the soul from such care. There were also such soldiers who, after being wounded, returned to the battalion, declaring: "We want to fight with you." Many years have passed, but I remember well his subordinates...

The commanding staff often had to not only drag their subordinates with them, but also drive them from behind. The reader already knows from what contingent the penal companies were sometimes recruited. Anyone who has launched the most convincing patriotic arguments with the sole purpose of leaving the colony or camp as soon as possible in order to prolong a cheerful life in the wild, is unlikely to be in a hurry to shed blood when he is at the front.

E. L. Golbraikh:

You should not think that all the penalty boxers were eager to fight. Here's an example for you. The attack bogs down. The survivors lie down among the dead and wounded ... Together with the company commander, Captain Shchuchkin, under German fire, we return to the starting line. This is true! A group of penalty boxers hid in the trench, hoping to sit out the fight. And this is when every soldier counts! From opposite ends of the trench, holding a pistol in each hand: in the left - the usual TT, in the right - a trophy parabellum, it is heavier, almost bursting over the trench - one foot on one parapet, the other on the opposite one, we move towards each other and, accompanying our actions with the appropriate text, we shoot over the heads of these parasites, without aiming and not worrying about the integrity of their skulls. Quickly they get out and run into the chain. Now, when I remember this episode, I think: "Lord! Was it really me!

This cannot happen in penal and assault battalions. Everything is at stake here. These officers are not deprived of their ranks (of course, we can only talk about those who have not been deprived of their military rank by court. - Yu. R.) and in most cases do not have a criminal record. Upon injury or serving their term, they are entitled to their former positions. According to the

memoirs of front-line soldiers and documents, one can make an unambiguous conclusion that the penalty boxers were also awarded. Of course, not often and

not generously. The permanent composition of the penal units was presented for awards on a par with the command and command staff of the linear units. So, judging by archival documents, many of the commanders of companies and platoons of the 8th OSHB had awards, including the Order of the Red Banner, Alexander Nevsky, Bogdan Khmel'nitsky 3rd de

The governing documents did not provide for any discrimination in terms of awards for military deeds and the variable composition of penal units. It was not for nothing that Vladimir Vysotsky sang: "And if you don't catch lead in your chest, you'll catch a medal for courage on your chest."

A. V. Pylytsyn:

For the successful completion of a combat mission ... many were awarded military awards: Orders of Glory of the 3rd degree, medals "For Courage" and "For Military Merit". These were heroes, from whose exploits the guilt attributed to them was subtracted, but even after that there was also enough for rewards. I must

say that the penalty box was not happy with the Order of Glory. The fact is that it was a soldier's order in terms of status, and officers were not awarded them at all. And, of course, many wanted to hide their stay in the SB as privates, and this order was evidence of this.

(S. 42.)

I. I. Korzhik:

Some of ours have been awarded. I received the Red Star.

N. I. Saprygin:

In the penal company, I received the Order of Glory 3rd degree.

G. M. Dubinin:

For fighting in the penal company, I was awarded the medal "For courage."

Sometimes the seemingly unbelievable happened. M. I. Suknev told about a case that occurred in 1944 on the eve of Catholic Christmas, when in one day the penalists earned not even one, but two awards. The memoirist at that time was no longer in command of the penal battalion because of the wound, but was at the disposal of the division commander, but he did not break combat contacts with the penal battalion.

M. I. Suknev:

I "took my hand" on the regiment commander, which Nikolai Tokarev, the first deputy division commander of Colonel Fomichev, made clear to me.

Phone call. Tokarev calls from the first trenches. He speaks in a comradely and confidential way, but orders: to take the observation post of the division from him! ..

The division's NP was located 500 meters from the enemy's positions, located in an open field, behind which were the Courland forests, dense, impenetrable ...

The cover company was made up of fines: sergeants and soldiers who got drunk drunk, got into a fight with officers, etc. from himself the stigma of a penal. The war is ending, we need to make it in time... On the evening of December 25, which reminded me of the "language" taken a year ago on the Volkhov on the same day, I noticed: the enemy did not fire, did not throw lighting rockets. What is this? Are

they retreating? But this is impossible. They have nowhere to go, but they can only go forward to break through. But concentrations of troops are not seen or heard. Breaking my head. And I decide. I inform the commander of the penal company: it is necessary to conduct reconnaissance by searching for "tongues". The senior lieutenant took up this rather risky initiative. A company of penalized soldiers dispersed over firing points

around the division's NP. The company commander selected volunteers who were ready to go to death, but to remove the shameful title of a penal! A small, one might say, "international" volunteered. The senior sergeant of the quartermasters is a Jew who speaks perfect German; the sergeant is a Belarusian and the private is a Kazakh, a young lad. We are preparing one platoon for cover.

And somehow I was sure that it would work out! At dawn on December 25, on Christmas day with the Germans, the sappers and I crept up to

wire fences of the enemy and, not finding anyone along the trenches to the right and left, calmly checked the presence of mines with mine detectors, made a passage in the fence, where our "international" of three fines entered, and behind it a cover of 10 submachine gunners. The platoon settled down as if in its defense along the trench, blocking its flanks here with sketched "hedgehogs". I immediately

return to the NP, because I am not supposed to be further than my positions, and I almost left with the scouts anyway. On the field phone, he informed Tokarev about the "operation" and received a "blessing" from him. According to another proposal - to move our 506th regiment into the empty trenches of the enemy who was on a spree, he promised to "solve" ... And I made a different decision: I brought the entire company of penalists to enemy positions! And there, I think, we will act according to the situation.

My orderly Alexei called me up from the dugout. I see a group of tipsy Germans approaching, who are being escorted by our three scouts. The prisoners play the harmonica, sing out of order and shout: "Hitler Kaput!" Twenty-three Germans. We hastily

searched them for weapons, and I sent them under the escort of our troika directly to the division headquarters to the commander of Fomichev ... An hour later, the scouts returned and immediately came to my dugout. They proudly showed me the Order of Glory screwed to the tunic!

The situation becomes clearer. The Germans, where our penalty box was, there are also dugouts in which Fritz anti-aircraft gunners walk. I propose, because scouts cannot be given orders, which some narrow-minded commanders often did, to go again and bring prisoners from another dugout. They agreed. Here I could not stand

it - I go into the trench to the penalty box, stretching the wire of the field telephone to me. I'm keeping in touch with the gunners.

Having passed the forest, the scouts again came out to a vast clearing, in the center of which stood a tank with an open hatch. The tankers, who also celebrated Christmas well, were snoring with might and main. To the right, dugouts were located one after the other, the distance between them was thirty meters. Our guys crept up to the third, from where the hubbub and the noise of the Fritz's amusement were heard, opened the doors. The senior sergeant ordered in German: surrender, period! With their hands raised, the Fritz went out, bypassing their weapons - rifles in a pyramid outside the dugout. And, picking up a large bottle of rum, they readily went with our prisoners!

At this moment, the post in the tank woke up. Then their commander appeared from the fourth dugout, the officers' one. He understood everything and fired upward from a pistol, giving a sign to the tankers. They fired after a group of prisoners, but missed! And

now our heroic trio again arrives at the division's NP, and with it 22 "languages"! An hour later, the guys returned to my dugout, they show me another Order of Glory. I repeat for

clarification: this happened on December 25, 1944 in the 198th Rifle Division of the 10th Guards Army of the 2nd Baltic Front. Whoever I tell about this case, they do not believe. But I rarely met a real combat front-line officer from rifle units. And the guards - they do not believe in such matters. Yes, for more than three years, having been in military bindings, you can publish a book about various incredible cases. But for this it was necessary to survive, which is not given to everyone.

(S. 218–221.)

Rewarding warrior-heroes were sometimes massive. So, in the penal units of the 64th Army during the battles near Stalingrad, out of 1023 people released from punishment for courage, they were awarded: the Order of Lenin - 1, the Order of the Patriotic War 2

degrees - 1, Red Star - 17, medals "For Courage" and "For Military Merit" - 134. But in the award

cases of the penal, according to the observations of the participants in the war, there were some nuances.

I. N. Tretyakov:

As for the awards upon serving the term - we did not have this. We tried to introduce them to them, but they answered us: "The penal is redeeming his guilt, why should he be rewarded."

In fact, such a refusal was a direct violation of the Regulations on penal battalions and companies in the part relating to the presentation of distinguished variables for state awards. But, probably, someone was playing it safe, arguing simply: for not presenting a fighter for an order or medal, they will not take off his head, but if he presented it unreasonably, they can warm it up.

The command of the fronts and armies treated the awarding of the permanent composition of the penal units in different ways. In some cases, the very fact of heroism was taken as the criterion, while in others, the command staff seemed to feel on themselves a certain shadow cast by subordinate penitentiaries.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

The command staff of the battalion was basically awarded orders. My friend Petya Zagumennikov (PTR platoon commander - Yu. R.) received the Order of the Patriotic War, 2nd degree. The then commander of the commandant's platoon guarding the battalion headquarters, Filipp Kiselev (by the end of the war he had already become a lieutenant colonel, chief of staff of the battalion) was awarded the second medal "For Courage". By the way, among the commanders of the battalion, the medal "For Courage" was regarded as a high award, approximately equivalent to

Soldier's Order of Glory. The company commanders Matvienko and Pekur received the Order of the Red Banner, and this order was considered one of the main military orders ... And I

and several other officers this time were bypassed with awards. We probably haven't shown ourselves enough yet. But soon, by order of the front commander, General Rokossovsky, I was awarded the rank of "senior lieutenant". I took this as a reward.

(S. 42.)

P. D. Barabolya:

Those battles were difficult and terrible, but not a single commander of our company, except for Captain Matveev, was awarded a single order. Only in 1944, for participation in the Battle of Stalingrad, I was awarded the Order of the Patriotic War 1st degree.

(S. 364.)

E. L. Golbraikh:

The officers of the ~~penal~~ divisions were not particularly generously spoiled with awards ... In the award lists, they wrote on them - "commander of a shock battalion" (or company), avoiding the word "penalty". If in the infantry a battalion commander who had broken through the fortified defenses of the enemy could immediately be presented with a high award, up to the highest rank, then they looked at us as "experts in breakthroughs." Like, this is your daily work and front-line share. What else do you want?

It happened, and the usual subjectivism, and even the boss's arbitrariness. Well, in war - as in everyday

life.

A. V. Pyltsyn:

And Lieutenant Colonel Baturin, who had already come to us in Poland as a battalion commander instead of Arkady Alexandrovich Osipov (for some reason my memory did not retain his name), was very sparingly presenting company and platoon commanders for awards and at the same time waiting for which order he would be awarded personally, so that, forbid God, no one can be presented to a higher reward.

(S. 43.)

It seems necessary to have a personal conversation about the Heroes of the Soviet Union who fought in penal units. So far, we undertake to reliably name only two names - the commander of the penal company Ziya Buniyatov and Vladimir Karpov, a front-line intelligence officer who received the hero title later than his penal epic.

Z. M. Buniyatov fought from the first days of the Great Patriotic War, but how he fought! In an article published in 1942 in the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper, they wrote about him as a "cunning, swift, like a tiger" reconnaissance officer, "who, in incredible conditions, in the most difficult conditions, could clearly navigate, bring accurate data on the number, weapons and the deployment of the enemy and who was valued in the battalion for his romantic soul and literary erudition.

The officer received the Star of the Hero three months before the end of the war. In January 1945, on the 1st Belorussian Front, he was appointed commander of the 123rd penal company. In this role, as mentioned above, he distinguished himself in the Vistula-Oder operation.

In the well-known two-volume book "Heroes of the Soviet Union", published in Soviet times, they did not disclose his belonging to the command of a penal company. Therefore, the essence of his feat is stated there as follows:

“The commander of the 123rd separate rifle company (5th shock army, 1st Belorussian Front), candidate member of the CPSU, Captain Buniyatov Z. M. distinguished himself in battles in Poland. On January 14, 1945, one of the first companies in the army crossed the river. Pilica, captured the bridge and held it until reinforcements arrived in the area of the settlement of Palchev (9 km southwest of the city of Varka). The company destroyed over 100 and captured 45 Nazis, captured 5 six-barreled mortars, 3 guns. On February 27, 1945, he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union”[130] .

V.V. Karpov fought in the 45th separate penal company on the Kalinin Front, formed in November 1942 in Tavdinlag from prisoners who expressed a desire to go to the front. He was sentenced to five years in prison under the infamous Article 58, so his release is from the category of rare cases, possible only in the exceptionally difficult situation of the autumn of 1942. Karpov distinguished

himself in battle, was released from the penal unit and sent to 629 1st Infantry Regiment (134th Infantry Division of the 39th Army of the Kalinin Front) as a scout. In February 1943, his criminal record was expunged. Vladimir Vasilievich fought excellently, participated in the capture of 35 "languages". In June 1944 he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet —

Union[131] . According to some reports, unfortunately of an unofficial nature, three more heroes of the Soviet Union fought in the penal battalion - Vladimir Yermak, Mikhail Kikosh and Joseph Serper. Private V.I. Yermak in July 1943, in the battles on the Sinyavino Heights near Leningrad, closed the embrasure of the enemy bunker with his body. In the two-volume book "Heroes of the Soviet Union" he is named the shooter of the 14th separate rifle battalion of the 67th Army of the Leningrad -

Front [132] But in the press of the northern capital, V.I. . The author of the St. Petersburg Vesti insists that the hero's biography was actually rewritten for the bio-reference book. Allegedly 19-year-old artillery lieutenant

Vladimir Yermak ended up in a penal battalion for an unfortunate oversight: while in the dugout, he was cleaning his weapons, as a result of which an accidental shot was fired at a soldier who was nearby. A military tribunal sentenced Yermak to imprisonment in a forced labor camp for five years, but delayed the execution of the sentence until the end of hostilities, which automatically meant sending the young officer to a penal battalion. Vladimir died in July 1943 in the very first battle, when the penalty box was thrown on the Sinyavin Heights for reconnaissance in force? That the biography of the hero could be varnished is not at all excluded. But it is equally clear that without a thorough and objective study of primary archival documents, the truth cannot be established.

Mikhail Ivanovich Kikosh became a Hero of the Soviet Union on October 30, 1943. According to some reports, at that time he commanded the 3rd penal company of the 65th Army. Officially, "the company commander of the 120th Infantry Regiment (69th Infantry Division of the 65th Army of the Central Front), Senior Lieutenant Kikosh, with a company on October 15, 1943, was among the first to cross the Dnieper near the village. Radul (Repka district of the Chernihiv region), captured and held the bridgehead, ensuring the crossing

of the regiment's units "[133] . In the press, one can meet in the same connection the name of the commander of the 60th separate assault engineer-sapper battalion (12th assault engineer-sapper brigade of the 51st Army of the Southern Front) Joseph Serper. The fact that I. L. Serper is a Hero of the Soviet Union, who received this title on October 19, 1943 for breaking through a heavily fortified enemy defense on the Molochnaya River in the Melitopol region, is undeniable[134] . But whether he fought in the penalty area - you won't find out about this in the reference literature. However, there seems to be a hint. From the book of the doctor of historical sciences F. D. Sverdlov, it follows that the commander of a sapper company, Lieutenant Serper, was captured in the Rostov region in the summer of 1942, fled with a group of the same poor fellows, and was able to go out to his own. Then there was a check by a special department of the NKVD [135] . It is known that it was in this way that many who were captured ended up in a penal battalion. Nevertheless, the historian does not directly write about this, and in order to definitely consider I.L. Serper a former penalist, additional archival searches are needed, as in the case of V.I. Yerma

The reader may be interested to know how the post-war fate of at least some of the permanent and variable personnel of the penal units, whose names named in the book.

Hero of the Soviet Union Vladimir Vasilyevich Karpov is probably the most famous of them. After the war, he served in the army for many years. In parallel, after graduating from the Literary Institute. A. M. Gorky, was engaged in literary creativity. Having retired to the reserve, he worked as deputy editor-in-chief of the October magazine, editor-in-chief of Novy Mir, and headed the board of the Union of Writers of the USSR. He is the author of the novels and short stories Take It Alive!, The Commander, Marshal Zhukov, His Companions and Opponents in the Years of War and Peace, and others. The former commander of the

penal company, Hero of the Soviet Union Ziya Musaevich Buniyatov, grew up after the war into a major historian and organizer of science. Academician of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, he headed the Institute of Oriental Studies in Baku for many years, was the vice president of the academy.

Semyon Lvovich Aria after the war chose the path of a lawyer. He became one of the most famous lawyers in the country. He, Honored Lawyer of the Russian Federation, laureate of the gold medal named after F. N. Plevako, and today, despite his advanced age, works in the Moscow Regional Bar Association. Pyotr Demidovich

Barabolya became a professional lawyer, only a military one. For many years he worked in the Main Military Prosecutor's Office, and retired as a Major General of Justice. Since 1990, he has been the head of the International Committee for Peace, Disarmament and Environmental Security in the Seas and Oceans (International Committee "Peace to the Oceans").

The former chief of staff of the 8th OSHB, Major Philip Andreevich Kiselev, rose to Major General after the war and worked for many years in the Main Directorate of Personnel of the USSR Ministry of Defense.

Alexander Vasilievich Pylytsyn, commander of a rifle company of the 8th Special Operations School, graduated from the military academy after the war, served in the Airborne Forces, was deputy head of a military school in Ussuriysk, head of the military department at the Kharkov Road Institute.

The post-war life of retired lieutenant colonel Mikhail Ivanovich Suknev, the former commander of the penal battalion, was connected with the fine arts. A professional artist, for a long time he directed the Novosibirsk creative production plant of the Union of Artists of the RSFSR. His paintings are exhibited in art galleries in Siberia and Altai. Ivan Ivanovich Korzhik, dismissed from the army in 1946, became a history teacher in a rural school in the

Orenburg region, where he worked

throughout the years until retirement.

Pyotr Seliverstovich Amosov, like M. I. Suknev, connected post-war life with art and, like I. I. Korzhik, worked with children, teaching drawing and drawing in one of the rural schools of the Arkhangelsk region. Efim Abelevich

Golbraikh devoted many years to the theatrical field. He wrote several books about the war and post-war life published in the USSR, Russia and Israel.

The former commander of a rifle platoon, Faud Bakirovich Usmanov, having retired to the reserve, became a professional lawyer, rose to the post of chairman of the Supreme Court of the Bashkir

Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. But regardless of whether the former fighters and commanders of the penal units managed to occupy a high social position after the war or whether they remained modest workers, it is the duty of posterity to keep a grateful memory of them, of what they did in the name of Victory. However, until now - even though more than 60 years have passed since May 1945 - this memory has not yet been adequately expressed anywhere and in any monumental form. It is in vain to look for a mention of the penalty box in the Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War on Poklonnaya Hill in Moscow, in the historical and memorial complex "To the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad" on Mamaev Kurgan in Volgograd, in the Memorial Hall of the monument to the heroic defenders of Leningrad on Victory Square in St. Petersburg and other memorials among those units, formations and associations that participated in a particular battle.

From this point of view, one should in every way welcome the initiative of the St.

who fought on the territory of the Kirovsky (former Mginsky) district of the Leningrad region, indicate the penal battalions and companies.

It is high time to discard false modesty and stop pretending that the penalty box simply did not exist. People gave their lives for the Fatherland, and the price of their sacrifice is no less than the fact that they died fighting not in ordinary line units, but in penal units.

Chapter

8 With death we play silent

Like the history of penal units, the actions of barrage detachments during the Great Patriotic War are still poorly studied.

The detachments, formed by order No. 227 in the combined arms armies, were placed in the “direct rear of unstable divisions” in order to eliminate panic, prevent the retreat of troops without an order, and they were given the right, if necessary, to shoot alarmists and cowards on the spot. The first weeks of such formations

in the summer of 1942 are recalled by
Veteran of the Great Patriotic War N. A. Sukhonosenko:

“At the time when order No. 227 was read out, I was a cadet of the school of junior specialists of the topographic service, which, after the evacuation from Kharkov, was in Essentuki. I was a witness and participant in that terrible retreat of our troops (if you can call it that, a disorderly retreat of a mass of people in military uniform) from Rostov-on-Don to the Caucasus. Then, as a very young man, I perceived this terrible flight under the onslaught of the fascist army armed to the teeth as a catastrophe. Now, after so many years, it becomes even more terrible from one thought: what could have happened if severe but necessary measures had not been taken to organize the troops defending the Caucasus? With the creation of detachments, cadets of the school, including myself, were involved in their actions. We participated in the detention of soldiers and commanders fleeing from the front, and also guarded the wine cellar, warehouse, cannery and elevator located in Yessentuki, which were subjected to raids by this unorganized mass of military people. For two days near Essentuki we stopped the retreating. As groups of about 100 people are completed

the retreating troops were escorted to assembly points. Then they were put on the defensive"[136]

But it is quite obvious that someone had to perform similar functions before July 28, 1942. To whom specifically? From the

first day of the war, military counterintelligence, represented by the 3rd Directorate of the USSR People's Commissariat of Defense and its subordinate bodies in the troops, was engaged in this for some time (similar structures also existed in the People's Commissariat of the Navy). In the directive to the heads of the 3 departments of the military districts, fronts, armies, corps, the heads of the 3 departments of the divisions, given on June 27, 1941, the head of the 3rd department of the NPO of the USSR, State Security Major A. N. Mikheev ordered to organize "mobile control and barrage detachments on roads, railway junctions, for clearing forests, etc." with tasks:

"a) detention of deserters;

b) detaining the entire suspicious element that has penetrated the front line; V)

preliminary investigation carried out by operatives of the bodies of the 3rd department of the NPO (1-2 days) with the subsequent transfer of the material along with the detainees under jurisdiction"[137].

The detachments were completed at the expense of the personnel allocated by the military command, they included operational workers of the military counterintelligence agencies. The latter, as we see, only conducted a preliminary investigation in relation to the detained suspicious persons, but they did not have the right to decide their fate, such as execution

on the spot. With the catastrophic development of events at the front, the flow of those who, for various reasons, left the location of military units or broke away from them, increased. Just one example: just two weeks after the start of the war, as the People's Commissar of the Navy, Admiral N. G. Kuznetsov, stated, entire groups of Red Navy men and even some commanders, independently "evacuate" from the front line and from the front line, seizing vehicles, "without hindrance and without control " did not get anywhere, but to Leningrad[138].

Soon, with the unification of the NKVD and the NKGB into a single People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, military counterintelligence was transferred there from the People's Commissariat of Defense. On July 17, 1941, by GKO resolution No. 187 ss, both in the army and in military districts, the bodies of the 3rd Directorate of the NPO from branches in divisions and higher were transformed into special departments of the NKVD, and the 3rd Directorate of the NPO itself was transformed into the Directorate of Special departments of the NKVD of the USSR. The following were defined as the main tasks of the special departments for the period of the war:

"a decisive struggle against espionage and treachery in the Red Army units and the elimination of desertion in the immediate front line"[139] .

Special departments received the right to arrest deserters, and "in necessary cases" to execute them on the spot. Personnel from the NKVD troops were allocated at their disposal, and in addition, they were obliged to provide all kinds of support to the chiefs of the guards of the military rear, which, by the way, were regular officers of the NKVD troops, mainly border ones.

To ensure operational measures "to combat deserters, cowards, alarmists, spies and saboteurs" in special departments, in accordance with the order of the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs L.P. Beria, by July 25, 1941, the following were formed: in divisions and corps - separate rifle platoons , in the armies - separate rifle companies, in the fronts - separate rifle battalions. All of them were staffed by the personnel of the NKVD troops, who were subordinate to the chiefs of the guards of the rear of the fronts.

Using these units, special departments organized a barrier service, setting up ambushes, posts and patrols on roads, refugee routes and other communications. Each detained commander, Red Army soldier, Red Navy soldier was checked. If he was recognized as having fled from the battlefield, then he was subjected to immediate arrest, and an operational (no more than 12-hour) investigation began on him to be tried by a military tribunal as a deserter. Special departments were entrusted with the duty to carry out the sentences of the military tribunal, including before the ranks. In "particularly exceptional cases, when the situation requires the adoption

decisive measures for the immediate restoration of order at the front", the head of the special department had the right to shoot deserters on the spot, which he had to immediately report to the special department of the army and the front (navy). Servicemen who lagged behind the unit for an objective reason, in an organized manner, accompanied by a representative of a special department, were sent to the headquarters of the corresponding division^[140] .

Some details of the practical activities of such formations were revealed by retired Major General V. A. Abyzov, the commander of one of those border detachments that, with a retreat into the interior of the country, were turned to create units to guard the rear of the armies of the Southwestern Front.

"The border detachments - the 92nd, 93rd, 94th - after withdrawing from the border in July 1941, reached the line Zhytomyr - Kazatin - Mikhailovsky Farm and were united into one consolidated barrage detachment ... - he recalled. - The consolidated detachment, as it concentrated, advanced: to guard the rear of the 5th Army - the 92nd border detachment and the 16th motorized rifle regiment of the NKVD and to guard the rear of the 26th Army - the 94th border detachment and the 6th motorized rifle regiment of the NKVD. Thus, in the Kazatin-Fastov sector, the above units were put forward to carry out barrage service. The 93rd border detachment, which I continued to command at the same time, remained in Skvir and constituted the reserve of the commander of the combined detachment .

But events developed so rapidly that the very next day the border guards were put forward to the front line with the task of creating a defense center at the Popelnya station in order to contain the advance of E. Kleist's tank group. The spontaneous nature of many protective

measures taken in the first weeks of the war is also confirmed by the recollections of the former deputy head of the Main Directorate of Military Counterintelligence of the KGB of the USSR, retired Lieutenant General A.I. 253rd Rifle

divisions. In the Krivoy Rog region, during the withdrawal of the regiment, which included the security officer, during a night march

“Individual unstable Red Army soldiers began to lag behind the marching column in order to desert. What to do? How to stop this dangerous process? Of course, there was no experience. I had to make my own decision. We discussed the situation with the commander of the regiment ... We decided to urgently form a barrage detachment. To do this, they used a platoon of mounted scouts, reinforcing it with communists and Komsomol members. We set the task of detaining all the stragglers and ensuring their movement by a separate group. The operational task was successfully solved, the instigators were identified and the necessary [measures were taken](#)”[142] .

The first experience of the activity of barrage detachments showed that it needs to be improved. The Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR stated that the verification of detainees is carried out superficially, often this is not done by operatives, but by ordinary detachments who are not able to identify German agents from among the Red Army and transferred to Soviet territory under the guise of those who escaped from captivity. By his directive dated July 28, 1941, the head of the

Department of the Public Organization of the NKVD of the USSR, Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Commissar of State Security of the 3rd rank, VS Abakumov, demanded that the barrage detachments be reinforced with experienced operational workers, who were responsible for questioning all detainees without exception. All persons returning from captivity, both those detained by barrage detachments, and identified by undercover and other means, were ordered to arrest and carefully interrogate about the circumstances of captivity and escape or release from captivity.

With the exposed enemy agents, they continued to work, and the military personnel, whose involvement in the enemy intelligence agencies was not revealed by the investigation - let us pay special attention - were released from custody and sent to the front. At the same time, however, behind them

both the special department and the commissar of the unit were to be constantly

monitored[143] . The fight against the evasion of military personnel from participating in battles went with renewed vigor after the well-known order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 270 of August 16, 1941 "On cases of cowardice and surrender and measures to suppress such actions." The headquarters obliged commanders and commissars to shoot on the spot "deserters from the command staff" - commanders and political workers, "during the battle tearing off their insignia and deserting to the rear or surrendering to the enemy." "If you give free rein to these cowards and deserters," the order said, "they will quickly decompose our army and ruin our Motherland.

Cowards and deserters must be destroyed . "[144] The order was well known to the personnel, since it was read in all companies, batteries, squadrons, squadrons and headquarters. Therefore, the Red Army men and commanders had a clear idea of the most radical measures that were applied to deserters (of course, not only from among the command staff) and those who voluntarily went over to the side of the enemy.

Here is another eloquent document. Since among the "unstable elements" there were many members of the CPSU (b) and the Komsomol, the head of the Main Directorate of Political Propaganda of the Red Army, army commissar of the 1st rank L.Z. and the army a special directive in which, stating that "a coward and alarmist with a party or Komsomol ticket is the worst enemy, a traitor to the Motherland and the cause of our Bolshevik Party", demanded "alarmists, cowards, self-seekers, deserters and defeatists to be immediately expelled from the party and

Komsomol and bring to court a military tribunal"[145]—

The initiative actions of the enemy, who widely resorted to detours and envelopments, tank breakthroughs, constant air strikes, landings in the immediate rear, along with the demoralization of part of the military personnel, as well as the mass death of the command and political staff of the Red Army, due to which the personnel of units, units and even formations remained without control, led to the fact that many military units were literally dispersed, sometimes without even having time to properly come into contact with the enemy. Quite a few

military personnel in the kaleidoscope of battle, when leaving numerous encirclements, lagged behind their units, and some deliberately fled to the rear. In the general mass, the German agents were also dissolved, transferred to Soviet territory under the guise of encircled and fled from captivity.

Looking ahead, let's say that in the winter - spring of 1942, a group of scouts from among the former Red Army soldiers was neutralized, which had the task of physically liquidating the command of the Western and Kalinin fronts, including the commanders of generals G. K. Zhukov and I. S. Konev [146]

What great attention was paid to the protection of Moscow from deserters and enemy agents, but they managed to penetrate there in considerable numbers. As the commandant of the capital's garrison, Major General K. R. Sinilov, reported to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs L. P. Beria, from October 20, 1941 to May 1, 1942, 9,406 deserters and 21,346 people who evaded military service were detained, 69 convicted in espionage and 8

saboteurs[147] . The rear, thus, attracted a significant mass of people from the front line, before whom, in the interests of state security, a reliable barrier should be placed.

As follows from the certificate presented to the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs L.P. Beria by the Deputy Head of the Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR, Commissar of State Security of the 3rd rank S.R. NKVD troops detained 657,364 fighters and commanders. After the check, 25,878 people were arrested, among which special departments were listed: spies - 1505, saboteurs - 308, traitors - 2621, cowards and alarmists - 2643, deserters - 8772, disseminators of provocative rumors - 3987, self-shooters - 1671, others - 4371 people . 10,201 people were shot, including 3,321 people in front of the line. The vast majority - 632,486 people (i.e., more than 96%) were returned to the front[148] .

So, in less than four months, more than 650 thousand military personnel left the location of their units for various reasons. The special departments of the NKVD could hardly cope with such a volume of cases, especially since the setting up of barriers in the rear was by no means their only

task. The situation required the creation of special units that would be directly involved in preventing unauthorized withdrawal of troops from their positions, returning stragglers to their units and subunits, and detaining deserters. It is worth mentioning that the first initiative of this kind was

shown by the military command. After the appeal of the commander of the Bryansk Front, Lieutenant-General A.I. Eremenko to I.V. Stalin on September 5, 1941, he was allowed to create barrage detachments in "unstable" divisions, where there were repeated cases of leaving combat positions without orders[149] .

A week later, this practice was extended to the rifle divisions of the entire Red Army. Directive No. 001919, issued by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on September 12, 1941, stated:

“The experience of fighting German fascism has shown that in our rifle divisions there are quite a few panicky and directly hostile elements who, at the first pressure from the enemy, drop their weapons, start shouting: “We are surrounded!” And drag the rest of the soldiers along with them. As a result of such actions of these elements, the division takes to flight, abandons its materiel, and then, alone, begins to leave the forest. There are similar phenomena on all fronts ... ”

In order to correct the current situation, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the commander-in-chief of the troops of the South-Western direction, the commander of the troops of the fronts, armies, division commanders:

"1. In each rifle division, to have a barrage detachment of reliable fighters numbering no more than a battalion ... subordinate to the division commander ...

the use of weapons, the elimination of the initiators of panic and flight, the support of honest and combat elements of the division, not subject to panic, but carried away by a general flight ...

4. To complete the creation of barrage detachments within five days from the date of receipt of this order "[150] .

Thus, already from September 1941, the barrage detachments (battalions) as part of the rifle divisions of the Red Army had nothing to do with the troops of the NKVD and were recruited from the personnel of the divisions themselves. By order of the Headquarters, employees of special departments only assisted them "in strengthening the order and discipline of the division."

It should be borne in mind that for some time, along with the barrage battalions, there were other formations with similar functions. Thus, by a resolution of the Military Council of the Leningrad Front of September 18, 1941 (that is, when General of the Army G.K. Zhukov was commander), four barrage detachments were formed in order to strengthen the fight against desertion and the penetration of enemy agents into the territory of Leningrad. The task of organizing the detachments was entrusted to the head of the guard of the military rear of the Leningrad Front, Lieutenant General G. A. Stepanov, and their goal was formulated as follows: "to concentrate and check all military personnel detained without documents."

The resolution directly ordered all detained servicemen, after the representatives of the special departments found out their identity, to be returned under command strictly to their units (of course, if the facts of criminal acts on their part were not established)[151] . Along with the army barrage

detachments, there were also barrage detachments formed either by military special departments or by territorial bodies of the NKVD. A typical example is the barrage detachments formed in October 1941 by the NKVD in the Kalinin region. From October 15 to December 9, 1941 in the zone of the Kalinin Front in the directions of Kalinin - Kushalino, Kushalino - Goritsy, Kushalino - Zaitsevo,

Kimry - Kashin they detained more than 6 thousand Red Army soldiers (then they were sent to the 256th rifle division and other military units) and almost 1.5 thousand people from the construction battalions. 172 deserters were also detained and prosecuted[152] .

The last example is directly related to the Battle of Moscow, which presented additional requirements for barrage (formations, regardless of their departmental subordination.

On October 12, 1941, the State Defense Committee of the USSR, by decree No. 765, ordered NKVD USSR

"to take under special protection the zone adjacent to Moscow, from the west and south along the line Kalinin - Rzhev - Mozhaisk - Tula - Kolomna - Kashira."

The NKVD troops located in the zone, police, regional organizations of the NKVD, fighter battalions and barrage detachments were operationally subordinated to the security headquarters of the Moscow defense zone with the task of "restoring strict order in the rear sectors of the front adjacent to the territory of Moscow"[153] .

Already the first results showed how necessary these measures turned out to be. Only in two weeks from October 15 to October 28, 1941, 75,568 military personnel were detained in the Moscow zone, of which 760 people were recognized as deserters and transferred to special departments[154] .

The rest, as if they had fallen behind their units, after a one-two-day check at the assembly points at the barrier outposts, they went to the points of formation of military units or at the disposal of military commandant's offices, from where they were sent to the front line. For example, the 93rd Rifle Division from the 43rd Army by the beginning of November was replenished with at least 1,000 people who had previously been detained by detachments.

One of the key links in the defensive battle for Moscow was Tula, in the area of which the 50th Army of Major General A.N. Ermakov fought, then Lieutenant General I.V. Boldin. Based on the memorandum of the head of the 3rd department of the Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR, major of state security V.P.

an idea of the typical organization of the barrage service during this period.

For many readers, information about the extremely small number of barrage units will certainly be a revelation. A special department of the NKVD of the 50th Army organized 26 barrage detachments of a total of 111 people and 8 patrol groups of 24 people. Apparently, it was considered most important to cover the maximum number of directions. 6 barrage detachments were deployed directly in the Tula region, the same detachments were sent to the cities of Stalinogorsk and Venev, and on the highway leading to Venev, along which the main movement of military units went, two barrage detachments and an operational Chekist group were additionally deployed. And here, with a lack of people, the detachments had to be divided into groups of 3-4 people. But even with such a

small number managed to do a lot. From October 15 to October 31, 2,681 people were detained by barrage detachments, of which 239 were arrested. Among those arrested, the vast majority were deserters, 38 of them were shot according to the orders of special departments[155] . Undoubtedly, these harsh measures affected the

achievement of the main goal by the Soviet command - Tula managed to defend, the enemy's plans to bypass Moscow from the south failed.

Later, up to the Stalingrad defensive operation, formations of greater or lesser departmental barrage subordination acted with activity on all fronts of the army, depending on the nature of the hostilities and the need for them. It should not be overlooked that in accordance with GKO Decree No. 1069 ss

of December 27, 1941, special structures were established to check the Red Army soldiers who were captured or surrounded by the enemy and were detained during the liberation of areas previously occupied by the Nazis. From the collection and transit points created by the People's Commissariat of Defense within the army rear, such servicemen were sent to special camps of the NKVD, where special departments filtered those who arrived, identifying traitors to the Motherland, spies, deserters, traitors. Persons who have not been identified

compromising materials were handed over to the military
commissariats as a potential draft contingent. On January 21, 1943, the GKO,
by Decree No. 2779 ss, partially changed the order established by him: the
commanders of the front troops could use those who had passed the filtration
directly to replenish formations and units (that is, bypassing military registration
and enlistment offices)[156] .

A qualitatively new stage in the activity of formations of a barrage
character began with the publication of the order of the People's Commissar
of Defense No. 227. The detachments created in accordance with it consisted
of soldiers and commanders of the Red Army, who did not differ in form or
weapons from the rest of the Red Army soldiers. The difference compared to
the detachments (battalions as part of the rifle divisions of the Red Army) in
1941 consisted only in the fact that each of them had the status of a separate
military unit and was not subordinate to the command of the division behind
which it was located, but to the command of the army through the OO NKVD
of the army. Accordingly, the detachment was led by a state security officer.
And those formations from

the NKVD troops that had previously performed barrage functions, being
directly behind the combat formations of units on the front line, were finally
redirected to guard the military rear and, thus, moved away from the front
line. Their first line of outposts passed at a distance of 10-15 km from the
front line, and the second - 20-25 km.

Order No. 227 was issued, recall, on July 28, 1942, and the states of
the barrage detachments were announced only on September 28. In this
regard, within two months they were formed and staffed according to
temporary staffing, and at the very beginning, completely based on the view
of the corresponding commander on this

issue. The first in terms of formation time should probably be considered
detachments created on the direct orders of Stalin two days after order No.
227 was announced. Having received a report that the 184th and 192nd rifle
divisions (from the 62- 1st Army) left the village of Mayorovsky, and the troops
of the 21st Army left Kletskaya, the Supreme Commander sent a formidable
telegram to the commander of the Stalingrad Front, V.N. Gordov, and a
member of the Military Council, N.S. Khrushchev. He demanded an account
of what had happened, and in addition ordered

“Within two days, using the best composition of the Far Eastern divisions that arrived at the front, to form barrage detachments of up to 200 people each, which should be placed in the immediate rear and, above all, behind the divisions of the 62nd and 64th armies ... subordinate to the military councils of the armies through special departments. At the head ... put the most combat-experienced special officers ... ”[157]

The front commander, Lieutenant-General V.N. Gordov, following the instructions of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, on August 1, 1942, set before the commanders of the armies that were part of the front the task, within two days, firstly, to form 36 barrage detachments, staffing them with “the best selected fighters and commanders from the Far Eastern divisions”, and secondly, to restore in each rifle division the barrage battalions established by the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. In addition to the two named, during the Battle of Stalingrad, another type of barrage detachments operated

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detachments manned by NKVD servicemen at special departments of divisions (numbering up to a platoon) and armies (up to a company). Army detachments and detachment battalions of divisions served as barriers directly behind the combat formations of units, preventing panic and mass exodus of servicemen from the battlefield. And security platoons under special departments of divisions and companies under special departments of armies were used to carry out frontier service on the main communications, detaining cowards, alarmists, deserters and other criminal elements hiding in the army and front-line rear[159] . Thus, for some time, all three types of barrage units existed on an equal footing, and today it is quite difficult to catch the difference in the specifics

of the tasks assigned to them. Probably, there was no special specificity, because everything was subject to the execution of one order: “Not a step back!”

In total, by October 15, 1942, 193 barrage detachments functioned in parts of the army, created by order

NPO No. 227 and armies subordinate to special departments of the NKVD, of which 41 were in the Stalingrad direction. They were armed with rifles, machine guns and light machine guns. As

often happens in a new business, and even in a multimillion-strong army, far from everything worked out in the formation of detachments. An audit carried out by the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army showed that poorly trained, undisciplined Red Army soldiers who did not know the Russian language and did not participate in the battles were often sent there. Many were in poor health, and even obviously disabled. Many units were not ready to conduct combat operations. Such facts were revealed by inspectors from GlavPU, in particular, on the Voronezh front[160] .

Reproaching members of the military —

councils and heads of political agencies for complacency, complacency and elimination from such an important matter, the head of the GlavPU, Lieutenant General A. S. Shcherbakov, in special directive No. , "without entrusting this politically important matter to secondary workers"[161] .

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What practical tasks were assigned to the barrage detachments? Prevent unauthorized withdrawal of line units, resorting to weapons if necessary. It is impossible to agree with the interpretations of this, the last provision, by the authors of the "Penal Battalion". In the film, the fighters of the detachment from the machine gun shoot the wounded penalists leaving the battlefield. A big sin is taken by the scriptwriter and the director. Let's start with the fact that

detachments were not deployed specifically for the penalty box. Let us recall once again: the latter, by order No. 227, were placed in the "immediate rear of unstable divisions." Meanwhile, penalty boxes were attached to conduct active offensive operations. Elementary logic suggests that such tasks could not be set for unstable connections and parts

definition.

AB Pylytsyn:

By the way, under no circumstances were there any detachments behind our battalion, and other intimidating measures were not used. It's just that it's never been needed. I dare say that officer penal battalions were a model of stamina in any combat situation.

(S. 56.)

V. V. Karpov:

We were really sent to the most difficult directions. But we didn't have any detachments ... I think if such a detachment appeared behind us, we would immediately shoot him to hell.

If it comes to that, then there was no need for detachments on the front line: those who were afraid or traitors could be shot on the spot by their commander. Order No. 227 gave him such

authority. In reality, the outposts of the army detachment were located at a distance of 1.5–2 km from the front line, intercepting communications in the immediate rear. They did not specialize in fines at all, but checked and detained everyone whose stay outside the military unit aroused suspicion.

Moreover, we repeat, there could be no talk of any "blue caps" as detachments. Surprisingly, the authors of the film do not see the difference between the detachments of the Red Army and parts of the NKVD, even where it was noticed by the enemy. One of the German leaflets, addressed to the soldiers of the barrage detachments with the aim of demoralizing them, literally said the following:

"You are forced to be executioners! You disgrace not only your relatives, but also the title of a soldier in the Red Army. After all, the army is not the Okhrana, not the NKVD! .. You were made, to put it in thieves' language, "cops". The only difference is that the "cops" are hunting for thieves and criminals, and you

set on the people, on the fighters of the Workers 'and Peasants' Army ! —

M. I. Suknev:

... Academician Arbatov claims that we were guarded from behind by detachments. Not true! We didn't have them. We had enough of this "Smersh", which saw everything. Your neck will be twisted right away ... Usually, if the Germans attacked, they surrounded us, where can you put a detachment?

(S. 163.)

P. D. Barabolya:

And here's what's curious: during the almost six months of commanding the penitentiaries, I don't remember a case when someone deserted from the company, ran away from the front line. They may object: they say, try to escape if there are detachments in the rear. But, firstly, I don't remember a case where I happened to see the notorious barrier somewhere. And secondly, I am firmly convinced that after all, the actions of these people who found themselves at the front were driven by the feeling of their involvement in the holy cause of defending the Motherland. Having once stumbled, they tried with all their behavior to wash off the "dark spot" from themselves, albeit at the cost of their life.

(S. 360.)

M. T. Samokhvalov:

I affirm that there were no detachments behind us, that's for sure.

E. L. Golbraikh:

The detachments never accompanied penal companies to the front and did not stand behind them!

The detachments are located not on the front line, but near checkpoints, on roads, on the routes of possible withdrawal of troops. Although ordinary units are more likely to run than penal ones. Detachments are not elite units where fighters are selected. This is an ordinary military unit with somewhat unusual tasks.

In essence, General of the Army P.N. Lashchenko wrote about the same thing:

“The barrage detachments were located at a distance from the front line, they covered the troops from the rear from saboteurs and enemy landings, detained deserters, who, unfortunately, were there, put things in order at the crossings, sent soldiers who had strayed from their units to assembly points”[163] .

The specificity of the combat activity of such formations is clearly evidenced by an entry from the journal of the 4th separate barrage detachment of the 52nd Army, made on August 7, 1944, shortly before it was disbanded:

“During the year, the detachment detained 1415 people, including 30 spies, 36 elders, 42 policemen, 10 translators, etc. For the excellent performance of command assignments in the detachment, 29 people were awarded orders and 49 medals. The detachment traveled from the Don to the Prut River, covering a distance of 1300 kilometers ... 83 settlements were combed over the year, including 8 cities. The personnel fought both offensive and defensive battles in the area of the Dnieper, the village of Belozerye, the city of Smola and others. As a result, 7 settlements were liberated... Over the year, the detachment lost 11 people killed and 40 wounded”[164]

Returning to the penalty box, we repeat that the detachments acted on the scale of the entire active army and were not at all intended to “serve” the penalty box specifically.

I. N. Tretyakov:

I read that the penalized were driven into battle almost like cattle to the slaughterhouse, and behind them stood detachments with machine guns and machine guns. Only one thing is not clear to me: where did the authors of the articles

see this? For the entire period while he fought as a commander of a penal company, I did not feel the detachment behind our backs. It was not required, since our subordinates had no other choice but to rise under the bullets. Everyone!

N. G. Gudoshnikov:

They went into battle only on orders, without threats and violence, without the notorious detachments from behind, I didn't see them anywhere, although they say that they were. I often even forgot that I was in command of an unusual unit.

Memories of those who were in the defensive formations, General of the Army P.N. Lashchenko confirms this.

“Yes, there were barrage detachments,” he wrote. “But I don't know that any of them fired at their own, at least on our sector of the front. After the war, I requested archival documents on this subject. No such documents have been found.

The retired officer mentioned above N.A. Sukhonosenko, who served in the detachment, from his rich combat practice, remembered only one case when fire was opened on his own:

"The weapon was used ... when the passenger car did not stop at our signal. The fire was opened on the wheels. As a result, we detained the commanders who were sitting in the car, the senior one with the rank of colonel. I don't know of any other cases."

Here's another piece of evidence. I. G. Kobylansky, who participated in the war from October 1942 to May 1945 and was part of the 87th Guards Rifle Division from Stalingrad to East Prussia, recalled:

"I have never heard from fellow soldiers and I myself have not witnessed a single case when the machine guns of the detachments looked at the back of the soldiers of our division. (But there were cases when we retreated - almost always these were unorganized "drap marches" - on the long road to

Victory.) Did we ever meet with detachments? Yes, I am a witness to two very different meetings ... The first took place on July 31, 1943 on the Mius Front, when the Germans drove our 2nd Guards Army from the bridgehead conquered during the previous two weeks at the cost of heavy losses. The retreat was disorderly, many hundreds of our soldiers became victims of a brutal bombardment in the beam, where thousands of retreating people accumulated (from that day the name "beam of death" remained). Chains of survivors and wounded were slowly dragging along the beam to where the rear had been located yesterday. Finally, organized groups of soldiers and officers began to come across to us, occupying the defense. From them it became known that the "drap-march" was stopped by a detachment. Soon, several officers appeared who announced the places of assembly of various units and subunits. No one talked about the shooting of the detachments on the retreating ones —

"[165] . The second meeting with the detachment turned out to be completely fleeting and without any consequences. During the relocation of the regiment, the head of artillery of the regiment, (

led the regimental batteries subordinate to him by a different route than the entire regimental column. On the outskirts of a village, the batteries were detained by an outpost of a detachment, but after a five-minute explanation with the commander of the detachment, Karpushinsky gave the

command: "On the horses!" and "Battery, march!" "At the same time, I clearly remember," wrote the front-line soldier, "that during my stay at the front, I heard several stories from fellow soldiers about the brutal actions of barrage detachments in other areas of ho

Of course, it must be taken into account that this evidence refers to the middle of 1943. But maybe continuous shooting at the retreating took place in the summer - autumn of 1942, when the withdrawal of our troops continued? Let's follow the documents. During this period, the detachments, it must be said frankly, did not sit idle. From August 1 to October 15, they detained 140,755 servicemen who had "escaped from the front line." Of these: arrested - 3980, shot - 1189, sent to penal companies - 2776, to penal battalions - 185, returned [\[166\]](#) to their units and to transit points - 131,094 people

The largest figures were given by the Don and Stalingrad fronts, which is not surprising, because they were the main blow of the advancing enemy. Accordingly, there were: detained - 36,109 and 15,649 people, arrested - 736 and 244, shot - 433 and 278, the rest were sent to penal units, and also returned to the place of their former service and to transit points.

The practice of general executions is not confirmed by the former military lawyer A. L. Dolottsev:

"After Order No. 227, we began to hold on, even if we were afraid. Fear was needed to make people go to their deaths. And this is in the most intense battles, when counterattacks, but it's scary to go, very scary! You get up from the trench - nothing is protected. Not for a walk, but for death.

Not so easy ... Then the coercive apparatus, and the detachments that stood behind. Run and get caught. Two or three will be shot, the rest - into battle! Not for myself, for my family.

After all, if they were shot, then as enemies of the people. And in the rear, the NKVD machine was already working: wives, children, parents - to Siberia as relatives of traitors ...

Not everyone was shot in front of the formation - obvious ones. With representatives from parts and with new replenishment. And immediately a rally: "It's better to honestly lay down your head than to die from your own bullet, like a ~~dog~~!.." [167]

Like other units and subdivisions of the line troops, sometimes they encountered blocking detachments and penal fighters, which is what is available, albeit isolated, eyewitness accounts.

I. I. Korzhik:

During one of the attacks, we came under heavy fire from six-barreled mortars, and some of the soldiers tried to move away and hide in the forest. They were detained by a detachment and shot.

Most likely, this is just confirmation that there is no rule without exceptions.

So, there were shootings. It is immoral to hide the drama of the events that took place in the summer and autumn months of 1942. At the same time, the elementary requirement, when covering the past, to stick to facts, and not emotions, does not allow one to join the conclusions about the "bloodthirstiness" of the detachments, which, according to other publicists, shot everyone to the right and to the left. Even in hot pursuit of the Stalinist order, when, as you know, the perpetrators show particular zeal, of the total number of detainees, 2.8% were arrested, 0.8% were shot, and 2.1% were sent to penal companies and battalions. The author does not at all share the cynical principle "they cut down the forest - the chips fly." Life is

valuable in itself, the fate of each person is important. Surely someone was sent to the penal unit, or even, being detained by a detachment, shot unfairly, hastily, by mistake, or even with ill will. No one would wish such a tragic

fate. But we cannot discount the fact that the vast majority of servicemen, who had previously left the front line for various reasons - more than 91%, got the opportunity to continue fighting without any loss of rights. It turns out that the circumstances in which nine people out of ten found themselves were dealt with correctly, and people were given the opportunity to return to the military system without any consequences for them. Today, in peacetime, how many miscarriages of justice are allowed! And there - bloody battles, losses, retreat, the situation at the front is teetering on the verge of victory and defeat ... And yet there were no massacres.

Approximately the same ratio of those arrested and returned to the front line was observed in each individual army. So, by August 7, 1942, that is, in the first week of existence, three detachments and detachments of the 4th Panzer Army of the Stalingrad Front detained 363 people - those who had left the encirclement, lagged behind their units, fled from captivity, escaped from the battlefield who had "doubtful injuries". After a thorough check, a special department of the army ordered the contingent of detainees as follows: 187 people were returned to their units, 43 were sent to the staffing department, 73 to the NKVD special camps, 27 to penal companies, 2 to the medical commission, 5 were arrested and 24 servicemen were shot before formation[168] .

As it is easy to see from the above figures, the emphasis in the activities of the detachments was not at all on repression. In this regard, the literature has already expressed, at first glance, an outwardly paradoxical, but, as it seems, true, in fact, idea. Namely: with the issuance of Order No. 227, despite its extremely harsh nature, the level of legal protection for military personnel, including those suspected of leaving their unit without permission, has increased. Previously, a lagging behind, retreating or leaving the battlefield could, without understanding, be shot by any excited commander or commissar, but now professionals and not in a hurry determined the guilt of a soldier. The fact that the fight against desertion had acquired a more legally defined character gave the offender an extra chance for an objective trial.

And this is not an idle opinion, born much later than the war. Confirmation of what has been said is reflected even in fiction, which was published during the years of war hard times. In the story of K. M. Simonov "Days and Nights" there is an episode when one of the Stalingrad soldiers Stepanov, having witnessed how, during the reflection of an enemy attack, a German tank crushed his partner, under the influence of unaccountable horror, "thinking nothing", threw trench and crawled to the Volga. He was detained near the headquarters of the regiment and returned to the battalion with an escort, starting a case of desertion.

In the end, they figured out Stepanov, they realized that if the shock had passed, he would have returned to his native battalion. "There is no corpus delicti to bring to trial by the tribunal," the investigator of the divisional prosecutor's office concluded. But here's what else is important: in order to comply with the law, the investigator, at the risk of being wounded, or even killed, made his way to the advanced unit, cut off by the Nazis from the main forces, in which Stepanov served. The interrogation was interrupted several times by German attacks, in the reflection of which both the prosecutor's office worker and the person under investigation took part. The investigator was wounded, Stepanov carried him out of the battle and bandaged him. They both could have died. And although the battalion commander, the protagonist of the story, feels a certain absurdity of this situation (risk the life of one person, so that as a result of the investigation, it is possible to take the life of another), he cannot help but draw a significant conclusion: "Meanwhile, all this, taken together as

if it happened according to the rules, as it should have happened. Exactly, as it should have happened. And if the procedure for bringing deserters to justice did not have a clear legal basis, some commander or commissar of Stepanov, a normal fighter, the same as his comrades-in-arms, the defender of Stalingrad, would have rashly "slammed". Unless with more

shattered nerves than others. The overwhelming majority of military personnel detained by barrage detachments returned to their units and afterwards. For example, during [the Battle of Kursk](#)^[469], the barrage detachments of the Voronezh Front in the period from 5 to 10 July 1943 detained 1,870 people. In the process of their verification, 6 deserters, 19 self-mutilators and 49 alarmists were identified and arrested,

fled from the battlefield. The remaining 1796 people, as having lost contact with their units, were returned to [service\[170\]](#) . —

A similar picture emerged on the Central Front.

“By strengthening the barrage service both behind the battle formations and in the rear of the units in the reporting period (July 1943 - Yu. R.),” Major General A A. Vadis, - 4501 people were detained, of which: 145 people were arrested, 70 people were transferred to the prosecutor's office, 276 people were transferred to the NKGB, 14 were sent to special camps, 3303 were sent to [units .»\[171\]](#) .

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And yet, the version about the detachments, recklessly shooting at the retreating servicemen, continues to walk through the pages of newspapers and magazines, on Internet sites.

A. I. Bernstein:

They (penalty boxers. - Yu. R.) were sent in groups, platoons, squads to the most risky areas, through minefields, etc. retreat or crawl back. They warned: “Back from the battle, if you are wounded, do not crawl. They'll shoot you, we don't know why you're crawling back. Wait. They will pick you up later.” Penal battalions and companies fought fiercely in battle. In front - the enemy, behind - machine guns in the back. You need to go to the enemy and destroy him. Go ahead. In some stories, I

came across information that the penalty box went on reconnaissance. I don't know. Although if they send to reconnoiter the minefields of the enemy, and behind the machine guns of the NKVD or "Smersh" ...

As you can see, there are such representations. They are isolated, not supported by a single fact and disagree with the absolute majority of the opinions of front-line soldiers known to the author. Nevertheless, we do not consider ourselves entitled to ignore them, firstly, respecting the right of a person to his point of view, and secondly, because the authors of the "Penal Battalion" consider it possible to build their version on such "evidence". But we also reserve the right not to believe in shooting at our

own as a daily practice of detachments. Here, as front-line soldiers testify, they had to prop up the trembling, retreating units and units themselves, to intervene in the course of the battle in order to make a turning point in it, more than once. It is no coincidence that the command, having corrected the miscalculations made at the beginning, began to form them from commanders and fighters who were persistent, fired upon, with strong front-line hardening, awarded for military distinctions. If we follow the logic of those who assign executioner functions to barrage detachments, then the question is: is it necessary to have combat experience in order to shoot at demoralized people? Doesn't fit somehow.

And the reason for the discrepancy is simple - everything was different. Let us again refer to the opinion of General P. N. Lashchenko:

"... The front received naturally, ~~unfired as they~~ ^{unfired as they} say, not sniffing gunpowder, and the barrage detachments, consisting exclusively of soldiers already fired, the most persistent and courageous, were, as it were, a reliable and strong shoulder of the elder. It often happened that the detachments found themselves face to face with the same German tanks, chains of German machine gunners and suffered heavy losses in battles. This is an irrefutable fact. You have to understand that on the front line everyone was doing one thing — fighting the enemy."

Were the fighters of the detachments "punishers"? Let us turn to the documents, and they confirm the story told by the front-line soldier. Cases when only the direct participation of the personnel of the detachment made it possible to turn the situation in one sector or another in favor of our troops were noted more than once.

Thus, the barrage detachment formed already in June 1941 under the 3rd department (then - a special department of the NKVD) of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet played an important role in the battles for Tallinn. When, at the end of August, individual units of the 8th Army, having lost control, left the last line of defense and fled, they had to be stopped by the threat of the use of weapons. The runners stopped, and then launched a counterattack on the enemy, throwing him back seven kilometers. This played a decisive role in the successful evacuation of Tallinn. But the personnel of the detachment

not only stopped and returned to the front line the retreating, but also participated in holding the defensive lines. Evidence of selflessness is the loss, which in the battles for Tallinn amounted to over 60% of the ^{his} personnel, including almost all commanders.

Upon the arrival of the detachment in Kronstadt with the onset of cold weather, a barrage service was organized on the approaches to Leningrad from the sea (on ice). In addition to being on duty at posts near the marinas, she was guided by the command to intercept small groups of enemy scouts, and after preparation, to conduct raids to capture "tongues" and fight enemy saboteurs penetrating to the fairway to lay landmines in the ice in order to undermine ships. The fighters were provided with camouflage equipment, were armed with automatic small arms, two mortars and a machine gun on skids[172]. The detachments that were created by order of Stalin No. 227 were not limited to —

preventing an unauthorized withdrawal from the occupied lines and the return of military personnel to the front line of the front. During the defense of Stalingrad on August 29, 1942, the headquarters of the 29th Rifle Division th army.

The detachment not only stopped the military personnel retreating in disorder and returned them to the previously occupied defense lines, but also entered the battle itself, the enemy was driven back. On September 12, when the 112th Rifle Division withdrew from the occupied line under pressure from the enemy, the defense detachment of

the 62nd Army under the leadership of the head of the detachment, State Security Lieutenant Khlystov, took up the defense. For several days, fighters and commanders

detachments repelled the attacks of enemy submachine gunners until they were on the defensive came up parts.

On the same days, another detachment of the 62nd Army successfully fought for two days against superior enemy forces in the area of the Stalingrad railway station. Despite their small numbers, the personnel not only repulsed the attacks of the Germans, but also counterattacked themselves, inflicting significant losses on the Germans. The detachment left its positions only when units of the 10th Infantry Division came to replace it.

On September 20, the joint actions of the detachment of the 47th Army of the Black Sea Group of Forces and the combined brigade completely cleared the station. Melekhovskaya, the eastern outskirts of which the enemy captured before that as a result of the unauthorized withdrawal of the brigade[173] .

In this context, for example, the considerations of the commander of the Don Front, General K.K. Rokossovsky, are understandable, who, as the special department of the front reported to the Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR on October 30, 1942, made a proposal to use detachments to influence the infantry of the unsuccessfully advancing 66th army. According to him, the detachments were supposed to follow the infantry units and by force of arms to force the fighters to rise in [174] . It is clear that in this way the future

Marshal of the attack of the Soviet Union tried not to intimidate the infantrymen, many of whom had only recently arrived at the front, but, given the small number of subunits and units, to saturate the battle formations of the advancing with experienced warriors, hardened in previous battles, than to strengthen the offensive impulse. Readers, of course, understand that in other sectors of the Soviet German front,

these detachments carried out not only barrage service, but often conducted direct combat operations. Here is an excerpt from the combat report of the 3rd separate detachment of the 8th Army operating on the Volkhov Front dated September 27, 1942: "...3. The detachment is engaged in the service of barrage posts. 4. When repulsing an enemy attack, Sergeant Tarasyuk Alexey Savelyevich, Belashev Semyon Vasilyevich, Red Army soldier Kuleshov Ivan Vasilyevich died a heroic death in the second company. During shelling in the area of the Rusanovskaya platform, Sergeant Istomin Efim Gavrilovich, foreman Nikolaev were killed

Vasily Lavrentievich, Red Army soldiers Vasily Alexandrovich Gordeev and Vasily Evdokimovich Kosachenko. 5. On September 27, the detachment detained 38 people without documents. Sent to their units"[175] .

At the end of the report, there is a characteristic conclusion: losses in recent days have been especially great in the 2nd company because the commander of the 265th rifle division, to whom the company has been temporarily subordinated,

is using it to conduct reconnaissance in force. On the Kalinin Front, retired senior lieutenant D.E. Tsvetkov, who had previously been a regimental scout, fought in a barrage detachment. "As a wall is propped up, which can collapse, so we propped up the front," he says, citing the battle that broke out in November 1942 as an example. The detachment lay down on the edge of the forest. Ahead, behind the bushes, there was a thin line of trenches, the roar of gunfire and the roar of enemy tanks. The task facing Tsvetkov and his comrades is very clear: in accordance with order No. 227, stop the infantrymen if they run, and return them back to the defense. But no one ran. The defense was crushed, and the detachments themselves entered into battle with tanks with crosses on their armor. Four heavy and two light wounds, military awards - which can more clearly indicate that not in the rear of the defending troops a soldier-guard detachment "sat out", but fought in a way that

not everyone had a chance in that war[176] . With the beginning of the counter-offensive near Stalingrad and the turning point in the situation at the front, the participation of barrage formations in battles turned out to be not only spontaneous, dictated by the dynamically changing situation, but also the result of a pre-determined decision of the command. The army commanders who were left without "work" tried to use them with

maximum benefit in matters not related to the barrage service. As follows, for example, from the special message of the head of the Smersh counterintelligence department of the 69th Army of the Voronezh Front, Colonel Stroilov, dated July 18, 1943, to the military council of the army, from the personnel of a separate company, he formed 5 detachments (with a total number of no more than 50 people). They acted for about one week, detaining 6956 people of private and commanding

environment. Of the detainees, 55 people were arrested, the rest of the servicemen were returned to their units. After the

withdrawal of military personnel from the battlefield stopped, Colonel Stroilov reported, "I removed the detachments, and their personnel were sent to perform their direct military duties"[177]. One example of the use of —

detachments "for other purposes" is found in the memoirs of the former commander of the 38th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Marshal of the Soviet Union K.S. Moskalenko. Recalling the circumstances of the capture of Kyiv, he noted the decisive actions of the combined detachment, which prevented the enemy from using reserves to counter our offensive north of Kyiv. This detachment, located on the left bank of the Dnieper south of Kiev, in the area of Kazachiy

Island, acted in isolation from the main forces of the army, which was almost all concentrated north of the Ukrainian capital on the Lutezhsky bridgehead. It included the 126th and 367th rifle regiments of the 71st rifle division, a training battalion, and also - we emphasize especially - the 127th and 128th army barrage detachments.

On November 2, the army commander set the commander of the combined detachment, the deputy commander of the division named above, Colonel S. I. Slivin, with the following task: "1. With the forces at your disposal, prepare a strike from the area of Kazachiy Island in the direction of Vita Litovskaya, Pirogovo with the immediate task of cutting the road leading from the south through Pirogovo to Kiev, and preventing the enemy from moving along this road. The operation should be started on the night of November 4, 1943 by special

order. 2. From the morning of November 3, 1943 (additional time), all units under your command and at your disposal are the SP (838th Rifle Regiment - Yu.R.) 237 SD and the courses of junior lieutenants, to act with fire, use smoke and rockets to pin down the enemy and deceive him and aim for the western bank of the river. Dnieper, for which to prepare boats and ferries. This order reflected one of

the most important elements of the plan for the upcoming offensive operation north of Kyiv. It was necessary to create a barrier in the way of enemy reserves, the transfer of which from

side of the Bukrinsky bridgehead (south of Kyiv), the fascist German command, as expected, was to begin immediately after the strike of our troops. And the detachment of

Colonel Slithin, according to the conclusion of the marshal, brilliantly coped with this task. On the day the army went on the offensive, he held down the enemy with fire and demonstrated the crossing of the Dnieper. And on the night of November 4, using improvised means, he crossed the river in the area of \u200b\u200bKazachiy Island and captured a bridgehead.

Having then received the task of developing the offensive at a rapid pace and by the end of the day capturing the settlements of Vita Litovskaya and Pirogovo, he fulfilled it with honor. Despite the fact that the detachment was isolated from the army and had no artillery support, it acted swiftly. Having cut the road leading to Kyiv along the Dnieper, and having captured the settlement of Vita Litovskaya, the combined detachment facilitated the actions of the shock group of the 38th Army to liberate Kyiv. For the enemy could not use the nearest road to transfer troops to the city from the side of the Bukrinsky bridgehead. Subsequently, the consolidated detachment prevented the retreat of the enemy grouping from Kyiv to the south along this road. "The successful actions of the combined detachment," [the](#)

memoirist emphasized, "did not escape the attention of Marshal G.K.

"Not for its intended purpose" was used by detachments and Army General A.V. Gorbatov. When preparing an offensive operation in February 1944 to cross the Dnieper and capture a bridgehead on its western bank, he, the commander of the 3rd Army of the 1st Belorussian Front, proposed a bold plan that provided for the concentration of the main forces of the army on the main direction. True, at the same time, the defense of the 70-kilometer section of the front was weakened, but, given its secondary nature, A.V. Gorbatov planned to put on the defensive, in addition to units of the fortified area, a reserve army regiment, two armored trains and a chemical company, also a detachment and a detachment. The commander considered this task to be quite feasible for the listed units and subunits, while the line units were preparing for the offensive. Alexander Vasilievich succeeded so

to convincingly argue his proposal, that the commander of the front, General of the Army K.K. Rokossovsky, agreed with him.

A. V. GorbatoV also resorted to similar measures in the summer of the same 1944 during Operation Bagration. In order to use the 40th Rifle Corps of the three-divisional composition for the development of the offensive, which, according to the memoirs of the commander, it was "pointless to keep ... for the defense of the northern direction between the Dnieper and Drut rivers", he first withdrew one rifle division from the defense, replacing it with detachments, then another, replacing it with a reserve regiment, and the third division, which was already participating in the offensive with the main forces, reinforced with another reserve regiment and detachment [\[179\]](#).

It should not be hidden: the bodies of military counterintelligence, admitting the possibility of the forced involvement of detachments in battles with the enemy, dictated by the course of events, expressed dissatisfaction when detachments were involved in unusual functions by decision of the higher command. "A number of facts have been noted when barrage detachments were used incorrectly by individual commanders of formations. A significant number of detachments were sent into battle along with line units, which suffered losses, as a result of which they were assigned to reorganization and the barrier service was not carried out," such a conclusion was made, for example, by State Security Major V. M. Kazakevich, deputy head of the NKVD OO of the Stalingrad Front, reporting in mid-October 1942 to Moscow.

At the same time, Kazakevich had facts on the scale of not only his own, but also some other fronts. For example, the command of the 240th Rifle Division of the Voronezh Front in September 1941 used one of the companies of the 38th Army's detachment to clear a group of German machine gunners from a grove. As a result, the company lost 31 people, 18 of them were killed. On the same

Voronezh Front, by order of the Military Council of the 6th Army, two barrage detachments were attached to the 174th Rifle Division and put into battle. As a result, they lost up to 70% of their personnel, the soldiers remaining in the ranks were transferred to replenish the named division, so the detachments had to be disbanded. The third detachment of the same army was put on the defensive and was not engaged in its direct duties.

As a combat unit, the detachment of the 29th Army of the Western Front was used by the commander of the 246th Infantry Division, in whose operational subordination the detachment was. Taking part in one of the attacks, out of 118 personnel, he lost 109 people killed and wounded, in connection with which he had to be formed

again.

The special department had personal claims against the commander of the 1st Guards Army of the Don Front, Lieutenant General I. M. Chistyakov and a member of the Military Council of the Army, divisional commissar N. V. Abramov. They, V. M. Kazakevich reported to the Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR, repeatedly sent two defensive detachments subordinate to them into battle, using those as "ordinary" units. As a result, the detachments lost more than 65% of their personnel and were subsequently disbanded. Due to the actions of the named officials, the order of the Military Council of the front on the transfer of five barrage detachments to the 24th [Army turned out to be unfulfilled\[180\]](#) . One of the leaders of the special department of the Stalingrad Front condemns the army command, ~~and~~

the major of state security Kazakevich himself is criticized from the position of today by the writer L. I. Lazarev. "Frank executioner cynicism" struck him with the conclusion of the "special officer" that the blocking detachments were used by the commanders of the formations "incorrectly", because of which they suffered losses, and the blocking service remained in the corral. Here, they say, what cynics, these "ranks of state security": they do not even hide that it is not their business to fight. The writer, by his own admission, not without malice imagined how the "punishers" at the behest of the commanders and divisional commanders, whom the "special officer" complains about, felt in their own "skin" what it was like there, on the "front"[181] . In what did L.I. Lazarev see "cynicism" here? In war, as he well knows, a front-line soldier, everyone has his own business. One ~~is~~

firing, the other is delivering ammunition, someone is holding the defense at the forefront, and someone has to fight crime in the troops, catch the same deserters or identify enemy agents. Wouldn't the commander of an artillery or tank unit be indignant (and rightly so) if his subordinates were placed on foot? Of course, it happened in battle

anything, sometimes tankers, artillerymen, pilots went to the Nazis with the usual "three-ruler", a bayonet, and even a sapper shovel. But this is in exceptional cases. Why make it the norm?

But our main objection to L.I. Lazarev is still different, namely: is it appropriate to speak of detachments as punishers at all? Sounds harsh, but extremely unfair. The writer calls punishers those whom (see above) the commanders of the same Stalingrad front themselves considered the best, most worthy soldiers, and it was from them, on the orders of the front commander V.N. Gordov, that the detachments were completed. And how will L.I. Lazarev

evaluate the cases when the soldiers of the Red Army had to detain the fleeing enkavedeshniki? Who is the "punisher" here? Here is a fragment of the report of the head of the NKVD of the Stalingrad Front, Senior Major of State Security N. N. Sel Ivanovsky to the NKVD of the USSR dated September 16, 1942: “

From 13 to 15 [September] a barrage detachment of the special department of the 62nd army detained 1,218 servicemen; 21 of them were shot, 10 were arrested, the rest were sent to their units. Most of the detainees belong to the troops of the 10th division of the NKVD and the liaison regiment of the 399th rifle division, which was abandoned on the battlefield by the commander and commissar of the regiment .

The family, as they say, is not without its black sheep. In July 1942, the 10th division of the NKVD itself carried out barrage service in the rear of the retreating South-Western Front, did a lot to restore order in the front line, then actively participated in the defensive battles for Stalingrad, showing courage and heroism. On December 2 of the same year, the division will be awarded the Order of Lenin and receive the honorary title "Stalingrad"[183] . But, as we see, even in its ranks, with a particularly strict selection of personnel, there were those who were weak in spirit. It was them who were detained by the army from among the detachments.

From selected fighters, detachments were formed on other fronts. For example, as the head of the political department of the 3rd Baltic

front, Major General A. A. Lobachev, "the personnel of the detachments were selected from the best, proven fighters and sergeants, participants in many battles, awarded orders and medals of the Soviet Union. In the 21st detachment of the 67th army out of 199 people. 75% of the participants in the battles, many of them were awarded "[184] . —

I would like to hope that readers have already been able to see what the functions of the barrage detachments were, and share the author's opinion: repressions were by no means the main means of restoring order in the troops. But it is also obvious that the detachments did not favor deserters, defectors, imaginary patients, self-shooters and the like. It happened - and they shot in front of the ranks. And here's what's interesting: do the "truth seekers", horrified by the

cruelty of such a measure, know another way to prevent a panicked retreat? Doubtful. It is noteworthy that the venerable

front-line soldier I. G. Kobylansky, who fought from 1942 to 1945:

"Let's try to imagine the state and behavior of people on the front line at the moment when the enemy launched an attack. Even the most brave and persistent, firing at the advancing, control what is happening to the left and right of them. ~~laterally~~ ~~eyes are~~ comrades in arms here, are their trenches empty, am I left alone, doomed to certain death or captivity ... How did the soldier act, discovering that his neighbor, and even more so - two, fled towards the rear? With very rare exceptions, he went after them. Thus began a chain reaction of panic retreat, which, except as an open threat of death, cannot be stopped. Very often, the "drap march", born from the cowardice of one or several people, turned into the death of an incomparably greater number of people. I am convinced that there is nothing more terrible (and more contagious) than a panic that has begun (not only at the front), if it can potentially engulf many people .

The front-line soldier recalled a case when, during one of the battles for the liberation of Donbass in August 1943, he himself had to prevent panic. The Germans attacked the positions of the battalion. The subordinates of I. G. Kobilyansky were already ready to open fire on them from guns when they saw a group of soldiers running towards the firing positions. They not only blocked the direction of fire, but could also carry away those on the defensive. In fear of losing the guns, pissed to the limit, the memoirist drew his pistol and, shooting upwards, rushed towards the alarmists. His impulse was supported by gun commanders armed with machine guns and several soldiers.

“Approaching the retreating,” recalls I. G. Kobilyansky, “I yelled that I would shoot everyone who did not immediately return to the trenches. The most selective mate flew out of my mouth, and my comrades-in-arms did not lag behind. The infantrymen stopped, looked back and ... turned to the trenches! The avalanche did not have time to form! And in a minute or two our guns spoke. The German attack was thwarted. I am still proud of how I behaved in those moments. But, if you think about it, I acted exactly as, according to my concepts, an employee of the detachment should have acted: I shot at the alarmists (not at people, of course), and brandished a pistol ... ”

It would be a serious simplification to say that the personnel of the barrage formations always and everywhere strictly adhered to the requirements of the orders, especially in the heat of the retreats of 1941 and the summer-autumn of 1942. We are not talking about this to justify cases of lawlessness, but suggesting not to break away from the sinful earth and remember how exceptionally difficult the situation at the front was.

And is it not a direct answer to L.I. Lazarev that the words of the commander of the penal unit Holbreich, who is repeatedly mentioned on these pages, sound like a direct answer?

E. L. Golbraikh:

Maybe in the forty-second year, the detachments "broken firewood", but who would stop the units

running in a panic? Here, I. G. Kobylansky, quoted above, admits that real detachments could begin the fight against panic not with threats and shooting into the air, but with shooting to kill, and he strongly condemns this kind of cruelty and inhumanity. But at the same time, I am sure that some kind of mobile reserve groups as part of rifle divisions must have existed in order not only to stop the faltering ones in a timely manner, not allowing a chain reaction to begin, as he puts it, a "drape march", but also along with the stopped fugitives close up the gap formed in the front

edge. These are the facts. If, however, some of those who write and shoot films on this topic are not interested in them, but a nice hackneyed record about detachments as "punishers" who voluptuously fired at their compatriots, further polemics on this topic seem useless. For

those who are interested, we believe that the story should be continued, and not to protect the formations that performed barrier functions, especially since they do not need such protection, but in the name of

historical truth. Numerous documents and testimonies of participants in the war indicate that the detachments made full use of the powers granted. In necessary cases, they opened fire over the heads of the fleeing, however, we repeat - they did not shoot at them to kill. We admit that individual cases of shooting at people in the heat of battle could take place, because both the fighters and the commanders of the detachments were not made of iron. But to claim that such was the daily

practice is blasphemy. In exactly the same way, general executions ~~were~~ were not allowed[186] . Cowards and alarmists were shot in front of the formation on an individual basis. Punishment, as a rule, is

only the initiators of panic and flight. So, the above-mentioned detachment of the OO NKVD of the Baltic Fleet from the beginning of the war to November 22, 1941 detained over 900 people.

Some of the detainees were released due to the lack of corpus delicti, person

parts are sent for further investigation to other special departments. 77 people were arrested and convicted, 11 of them were shot on the spot or in front of the line[187] . And here are —

some typical examples from the history of the battle on the Volga.
On

September 14, 1942, the enemy launched an offensive against units of the 399th Infantry Division of the 62nd Army. The soldiers and commanders of the 396th and 472nd rifle regiments began to retreat in a panic. The head of the detachment, junior lieutenant of state security Elman, ordered his detachment to open fire over the heads of the retreating. As a result, the personnel of these regiments was stopped and two hours later the regiments —

occupied the former lines of defense[188] . On October 15, in the area of the Stalingrad Tractor Plant, the enemy managed to reach the Volga and cut off the remnants of the 112th Rifle Division, as well as three (115.124 and 149th) separate rifle brigades, from the main forces of the 62nd Army. Having succumbed to panic, a number of military personnel, including commanders of various degrees, tried to abandon their units and, under various pretexts, cross to the eastern bank of the Volga. In order to prevent this, the task force under the leadership of senior detective lieutenant of state security Ignatenko, created by a special department of the 62nd army, put up a barrier, combining the remnants of platoons of special departments with the personnel of the 3rd army detachment. In 15 days, up to 800 privates and officers were detained and returned to the battlefield, 15 alarmists, cowards and deserters were shot in front of the ranks.

On October 2, 1942, during the offensive of our troops, individual units of the 138th Infantry Division, met by powerful enemy artillery and mortar fire, faltered and fled back in a panic through the battle formations of the 204th Infantry Division, which were in the second echelon. By the measures taken by the command and detachment battalion of the division, the situation was restored. Seven cowards and alarmists were shot in front of the formation, and the rest were returned to the front line. A similar incident occurred on October

16, when, during an enemy counterattack, part of the Red Army soldiers of the 781st and 124th rifle divisions showed cowardice and began to leave the field in a panic.

fight, dragging others along with it. The army detachment of the 21st Army, which was located in this sector, eliminated the panic by force of arms and restored the previous

situation. On November 19, during the offensive of units of the 293rd Rifle Division, during an enemy counterattack, two mortar platoons of the 1306th Rifle Regiment left their line without an order from the command and, throwing their weapons in a panic, fled from the battlefield. The platoon commanders, junior lieutenants Bogatyrev and Yegorov, not only did not stop the flight, but also joined their subordinates themselves. The platoon of submachine gunners of the army detachment, which was located on this site, stopped the fleeing and, having shot two alarmists in front of—

the formation, returned the rest to their previous lines[189] . On the first day of the battle on the Kursk Bulge on July 5, 1943, the rifle battalion of Captain Rakitsky, which was part of the 13th Army of the Central Front, arbitrarily left the occupied line and retreated in a panic to the rear. By force of arms,

he was detained by a detachment and returned to [battle\[190\]](#) . Harsh? Yes, harsh. But the tears of various “human rights activists” shed today for the “innocent” victims are not worth much when you find out what traitors and

deserters went to when they evaded military duty. So, in October 1941, a group of marines of the 2nd brigade (Baltic Fleet), consisting of 10 people, was sent behind enemy lines for reconnaissance. However, she “lost” her orientation and, led by the squad leader, began to

make her way to her rear, where she was detained. Whenever possible, deserters forged, or even made fictitious documents, taking advantage of the negligence of workers who had stamps and seals at their disposal, or resorting to any seals and simply coins with the image of the state

emblem. As operatives of the NKVD of the Baltic Fleet established, the Red Army soldier Kislitsin, taking advantage of the fact that the text of the certificate issued to him in the medical battalion occupied only the upper half of the writing sheet, separated the blank half with the seal and signature of the doctor at the bottom and fabricated a certificate, according to which he was supposedly allowed to leave

at the cost of leaving the front line, he prepared letters addressed to a certain major general and, during checks, presented them to the barrier posts, referring to the fact that he was sent with an urgent report to the rear[191]

The weak in spirit resorted to various tricks on other fronts. Here, for example,

are the lines from the memorandum of the NKVD PA of the 43rd Army to the head of the PA of the Western Front, Commissar of State Security of the 3rd rank A. M. Belyanov (not earlier than November 7, 1941):

“The secretary of the party bureau of the motorized rifle battalion of the 24th tank brigade, political instructor Solovyov, shot himself in the foot on November 3. On November 7, Sevostyanov, a Red Army soldier of the same battalion, wounded himself in the shoulder. On the same day, a Red Army soldier of this battalion, Ilya Andreevich Chepchugov, wounded himself in the arm.

Lieutenant —

Kurylenko made the same self-injury”[192] . In the message of the NKVD of the Stalingrad Front to the Directorate of the NKVD of the USSR dated August 14, 1942 “On the implementation of order No. 227 and the response of the personnel of the 4th tank army to it”, the following facts are given: During the battle, Stykov and Dobrynin got scared, abandoned their squads and fled from the battlefield, both were detained by a barrage detachment and, by order of the special division (special department of the division. - Yu. R.), they were shot in front of the ranks.

Ogorodnikov, a Red Army soldier of the same regiment and division, self-injured his left hand, was convicted of a crime, for which he was put on trial by a military tribunal.

And here is a fragment of another memorandum to the Directorate of the OO NKVD of the USSR, but already the OO NKVD of the Don Front dated February 17, 1943 “On the work of special agencies to combat cowards and alarmists ...”: “On November 27, 1942, the commander of the battalion of the 206th line] shelf... SD st. Lieutenant Tairov Ivan Evdokimovich during the counterattack of the enemy, when German tanks appeared, he left the battalion and fled from the battlefield. As a result, the battalion, having no control, suffered great

losses and retreated from the line he occupied. On November 29, Tairov was detained by a special department ... in the village. Yertzovka, where he hid under the guise of a wounded man... By order of the special division, with the consent of the division command, Tairov was shot in front of the

formation of the regiment's command staff "[193] . As the situation at the front changed, with the transition to the Red Army of the strategic initiative and the beginning of the mass expulsion of the invaders from the territory of the USSR, the need for detachments, as mentioned above, disappeared. Order

"Not a step back!" completely lost its former meaning. The command increasingly used this kind of military formations as ordinary rifle units. The need to bring their legal position into line with actual use became more and more urgent.

In August 1944, the initiative was taken by the head of the political department of the 3rd Baltic Front, Major General A. A. Lobachev. The inspection of the detachments appointed by him established that these units do not fulfill their direct functions, determined by order of the People's Commissar of Defense No. the rear of the armies of the front, etc. The revealed facts were very eloquent. So, the 7th detachment of the 54th army was literally torn apart in parts: one automatic platoon guarded the second echelon of the army

headquarters, the other was attached to the 111th rifle corps with the task of protecting the communication lines from the corps to the army, the rifle platoon was attached to the 7th rifle corps with the same task, the machine-gun platoon was in the reserve of the detachment commander, 9 people worked in the departments of the army headquarters, while the platoon commander senior lieutenant Gonchar was appointed "concurrently" commandant of the rear of the army.

In the 5th detachment of the same 54th army, out of 189 people in the state, more than half were used in various jobs - serving the AHO of the army headquarters as cooks, shoemakers, tailors, storekeepers, clerks, in departments of the army headquarters as liaisons and orderlies; were at the disposal of the commandant of the army headquarters, served the headquarters of the detachment. But many of them

had serious front-line experience, were previously awarded, and their stay at the forefront would bring real benefits.

The same situation was revealed in other detachments of the front. The states of their headquarters swelled by half, three times, idleness and lack of control on the part of higher headquarters led to the fact that in most of the detachments military discipline was at a low level, "people dissolved", many committed gross violations of military discipline.

A. A. Lobachev outlined his observations and conclusions in a report to the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, Colonel-General A. S. Shcherbakov, concluding the document with the following sentence: appointment in the present situation"[194] . Whether the head of the political department of the 3rd Baltic Front took the initiative himself, or whether he was prompted "from above" (which is quite possible in the then—

political practice) - in the end, it does not matter. In any case, two months later, on October 29, 1944, People's Commissar of Defense I.V. Stalin issued Order No. 0349, which acknowledged that "due to the change in the general situation on the fronts, the need for further maintenance of barrage detachments has disappeared." By November 15, 1944, they were disbanded, and the personnel of the detachments were sent to replenish rifle divisions[195] .

If we do not simplify the situation, do not whip up passions, as our opponents do, the establishment of detachments was one of the extreme disciplinary measures that the Supreme High Command resorted to in order to delay and then stop the retreat of troops and stabilize the front line. At the same time, contrary to incompetent points of view that have penetrated popular and even scientific literature, the barrage formations were by no means some kind of punitive detachments that allegedly prevented the retreat of troops through mass executions. Their activities were regulated by laws and orders, which, of course, bore the imprint of harsh wartime.

Conclusion

The combat activity of penal units is a local but integral part of the Great Patriotic War. And at the same time, it is the clearest illustration of the difficult path that our people followed until the Act of Germany's unconditional military surrender became a given. As part of penal battalions and companies, almost 420,000 only soldiers of variable composition fought, of which at least every second gave his life in battle. For this reason alone, attempts by the authors of some books and television films to speculate on the "penalty" topic, to operate with literally astronomical figures in determining the number of fines and the scale of losses, look unacceptable and disgusting.

And this practice has become very common in the last two decades. When referring to the plots, sharp and painful for the public memory, related to the defeats of the Red Army, losses, captivity, the activities of special departments, penal units, barrage detachments, some people consider it unnecessary to carefully analyze and calibrate conclusions, restraint of assessments and empathy for front-line soldiers, and without that sipped grief and trials.

Since the second half of the 1980s, the attack on the historical memory of Russian citizens has been in full swing. It has a systemic character: they hit the sacred memory of the Victory - almost the only bond that holds our entire people, young and old, as a single whole, preventing it from disintegrating into generations, nationality, faith, territory.

In the ranks of historical revanchists, the most diverse audience has closed: from overseas Russophobes and patrons of SS legionnaires in the Baltic states to homegrown Vlasovites in spirit and convictions. Those who are still not comfortable with the victory of the Soviet people over German fascism are pursuing the goal of replaying the geopolitical, political and spiritual outcomes of the war and reconsidering the role of the Soviet Union in shaping the post-war picture of the world.

We are being forced to completely surrender positions that we have always considered unshakable, because they reflect objective reality. Namely: to come to terms with the fact that everything in our history was either "wrong" or completely criminal; to recognize as the aggressor not fascist Germany, but the Soviet Union; to believe that not Hitler's military machine, but the Kremlin leadership systematically destroyed the Soviet people during the war; not object to the assertion that our commanders are mediocre, capable of defeating the enemy with nothing more than great bloodshed, and that the soldiers went into battle only out of fear of the barrage detachments and the Smersh.

Five years ago, in May 2005, revanchists demanded that, in fact, not the triumph over Nazism be celebrated, but the 60th anniversary of penal battalions and detachments, deportations and occupations. Today, on the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of World War II and on the eve of the 65th anniversary of the Great Victory, the battle unfolded at the last frontier. By a resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Soviet Union is equated in responsibility for the outbreak

of World War II with Nazi Germany. Russia is declared a country that appeared as a result of the revision of the results of the Second World War, and on this basis, it, the legal successor of the Soviet Union, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, is denied the right to vote in defense of the historical past, to insist on the need for the entire world community to comply with the prevailing in Yalta and Potsdam and confirmed in Helsinki in 1975 of the international legal system and the system of world order.

At the same time, many former republics of the USSR, like a number of other countries with the support of NATO, PACE and other international organizations, do not disdain very free interpretations of the past, deny the Red Army a liberation mission, and rehabilitate fascist accomplices. In a word, what fascism

failed to achieve with weapons in the 40s of the last century, its heirs, regardless of nationality, are trying to achieve with the help of information and psychotechnologies. Revanchists of domestic bottling are also actively catching up with foreign Russophobes. Freed from political censorship, they also freed themselves from moral censorship, from the censorship of truth and

under the pretext of a "new reading" of history, they are humiliating Russia with might and main, mocking the Victory and the winners. They are self-confident, aggressive, do not skimp on the most ridiculous reproaches, accusing their opponents of reproducing Stalinist concepts.

Who argues: the painful points of the war are still bleeding, they need to be healed with the truth, and historians do a lot for this. Although, probably, not everything and not as deep and thorough as you can and should do. But, it seems, the revanchists are not interested in this. Not a scientific search for truth, but repentance, they expect from us. Endless and humiliating repentance, humiliation, trampling into the dirt the memory of the war, Victory and winners.

20, 30 years ago, this was unimaginable. An active front-line generation would simply not allow talking about the events of the past in this way. Today, the front-line soldiers - and the year of birth of the last conscription who participated in the hostilities, 1926 - are almost 85 years old. There are few of them left, and, alas, they have not determined the height of the moral bar in society for a long time. Both the veterans themselves and their life work need protection. To ensure it is the duty of the children and grandchildren of front-line soldiers. Our common duty.

Not afraid of accusations of arrogance, the author of this book declares: he perceives his modest work precisely as the posthumous testament of his father, Viktor Emelyanovich Rubtsov, a Baltic sailor since 1943, as a testament to all front-line soldiers, who have died and are living. I

would like to believe that the book, written at the intersection of documents and living testimonies of the war participants themselves, will be of interest to those compatriots who are spiritually close to the author's concerns about the preservation of our common historical memory. And he will be able to make his modest contribution to protecting the truth about the war, the Great Victory and the winners.